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**Disrupted Idylls: Nature, Equality, and the Feminine in Sentimentalist Russian Women's Writing (Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova)**

Stohler, Ursula

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-05927-4>

Other titles: With translations by Emily Lygo

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-120423>

Monograph

Accepted Version

Originally published at:

Stohler, Ursula (2016). Disrupted Idylls: Nature, Equality, and the Feminine in Sentimentalist Russian Women's Writing (Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova). Bern: Peter Lang.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-05927-4>

Ursula Stohler

## **Disrupted Idylls:**

**Nature, Equality, and the Feminine**

**in Sentimentalist Russian Women's Writing**

**(Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova)**

*With translations by Emily Lygo*

This book is a revised version of my dissertation, *Russian Women Writers of the 1800–1820s and the Response to Sentimentalist Literary Conventions of Nature, the Feminine, and Writing: Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova*, submitted to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Russian Studies, June 2005

## **Abstract**

This study explores the ways in which Russian women writers responded to Sentimentalist conventions of authorship, challenging their conceptualisation of women as mute and passive beings. Its particular focus is on the works by Anna Naumova, Mariia Pospelova and Mariia Bolotnikova, three late-18<sup>th</sup> - and early-19<sup>th</sup> - century Russian women authors who have only recently begun to receive some slight scholarly attention from Western European researchers in Russian Women's Studies.

The study not only provides a close literary analysis of the writings by these women, it also applies political, social, and feminist theory, examining both the pitfalls and the opportunities encountered by women authors operating in the context of a Sentimentalist culture of feminisation strongly influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings. It argues that, while restricting women to essentialist conceptions, Sentimentalist discourse also offered female authors a means of acquiring symbolic authority, enabling them to claim social equality by appropriating the Sentimentalist re-evaluation of nature and the notion of natural rights.

As they created self-images as authors, legitimising their writerly activities, provincial women writers in particular referred to their alleged closeness to nature. Excluded from the public sphere of politics by Sentimentalist culture, women also took advantage of the movement's focus on and elevated appreciation of the home and the family to draw attention to concerns of a more private nature.

By examining literature produced at a time when Romantic ideals began to eclipse Sentimentalist aesthetics, the study illustrates the challenge of the Sentimentalist notion of women by several Russian women and their authoritative, autonomous and/or outspoken female characters.

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## Acknowledgements

Many people and institutions have generously assisted me in the writing of this book, for which I am profoundly indebted to them.

First of all I would like to thank my teachers at Kantonsschule Oerlikon near Zurich, in particular history teacher Ursula Verhein, who first drew my attention to gender aspects in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and English teacher Verena Dedial-Lutz, whose feminist views and love of British culture were a great inspiration. I would also like to thank Professor emeritus Rolf Fieguth at the Department of Slavistics, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, who encouraged me to explore Russian Sentimentalist women's writing, both in written assignments and in my *Lizentiatsarbeit* (comparable to a Master's thesis), *Anna Buninas Übersetzung von Boileaus Art Poétique im Problemkontext weiblicher Autorenschaft zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Anna Bunina's Translation of Boileau's *Art of Poetry* in the Context of Female Authorship in the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century).

A three-year Graduate Teaching Assistantship from the Department of Modern Languages, Russian Section, at the University of Exeter, UK, enabled me to explore the topic in depth and to complete my PhD thesis, *Women Writers of the 1800–1820s and the Response to Sentimentalist Literary Conventions of Nature, the Feminine and Writing: Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova*. I am immensely grateful to my supervisors, Katharine Hodgson and Carol Adlam, for their continuous support, encouragement and invaluable advice, for their assistance in search of funding, and their generosity which allowed me to research this fascinating topic. Moreover, I am grateful to Wendy Rosslyn, without whose numerous comments as an external examiner of my thesis this book would not have seen the light of day.

The *Overseas Research Student Award Scheme* (Universities UK, England) provided generous additional financial assistance during those three years, as did contributions from two Swiss foundations, *Dr. Max Husmann Stiftung für Begabte* (Dr. Max Husmann Foundation for the Gifted), and *Stiftung für die Frau* (Women's Foundation). Finally, the *Postgraduate Research Fund of the School of Modern Languages* at the University of Exeter, and the *British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies* funded research visits to Russian archives and libraries that were of crucial importance for the gathering of material for my study.

Various parts of this book were presented at conferences and research meetings, which produced valuable feedback from scholars in my field. In 2000, during the *Osteuropa-Tage* (Days of Eastern Europe) at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, I presented work on Anna Bunina. In 2001 I compared Anna Bunina and Mariia Pospelova at the *Junges Forum Slavistische Literaturwissenschaft* (Young Forum for Slavonic Literary Studies) in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. At the Postgraduate Research Seminar at the University of Exeter in October 2001, I focused on women and poetry in imperial Russia.

In 2002, I explored the question of Russian women poets and the craft of writing at the *Postgraduate Research Seminar*, Schools of Modern Languages, Universities of Bristol and Exeter, UK. Subsequently, I gave a public lecture on the topic of early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian women writers, presented a paper on Sentimentalism's potential for social criticism to the *Interdisciplinary Conference 'Beyond Anthropocentrism'*, and addressed the question of the feminine myth in Russian Sentimentalism in a presentation to the *Feminist Research Network*, all at the University of Exeter.

In 2003 I presented a paper on women's opportunities to become writers in the Sentimentalist era to the *Annual Meeting of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia* at Hoddesdon, UK, and to Professor Dr Natal'ia Kochetkova's *Study Group of Russian Eighteenth-Century Literature* at Pushkin House in St Petersburg, Russia.

In 2005 I discussed the Russian reception of the French poet Mme Deshoulières' meditative idylls during a research meeting of the *Junges Forum Slavistische Literaturwissenschaft* (Young Forum for Slavonic Literary Studies) in Bern, Switzerland, and—in 2006—at the conference *Translators, Interpreters, Mediators: Women Writers 1700–1900* at Chawton House Library in Alton, UK, and at the conference *Crossing Borders: Transpositions and Translations in Russian Culture* in Cambridge, UK. Contrasting ideals of family structures in the work of Anna Labzina were at the centre of my presentation to the conference *Familiengeschichten: Familienstrukturen in biographischen Texten* (Family Stories: Family Structures in Biographical Texts) held in 2006 at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

In 2007 my presentation to the *XII<sup>ème</sup> Congrès International des Lumières* in Montpellier, France, focused on the research potential of texts by Russian

Sentimentalist women writers which I had published online: *The Corinna Project*<sup>1</sup> ran from January 2002 to October 2003 at the Department of Russian at the University of Exeter in collaboration with what was then the University's Centre for Nineteenth Century European Literature. In 2008, at the conference *Going European? New Approaches to European Women's Writing* in Utrecht, The Netherlands, I presented a paper on research opportunities in transcultural influences in Russian women's writing. Finally, I presented a paper on conceptions of the muse in Anna Naumova's writings during a panel on 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian women at the National Convention of the *Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies* (formerly the *American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies*) in Philadelphia, USA.

I am as grateful to participants of the aforementioned conferences for their advice, comments and discussions, as to the editors and reviewers of *Aspasia* and other publishers of articles mentioned below, whose feedback contributed to improving various aspects of this book. Among them are Maria Bucur, Anthony Cross, Krassimira Daskalova, Francisca de Haan, Amanda Ewington, Diana Greene, Gitta Hammarberg, Catriona Kelly, Joachim Klein, Natal'ia Kochetkova, Marcus C. Levitt, Charlotte Rosenthal, Wendy Rosslyn, Roland Vroon, Andrei Zorin, and the late Mikhail Fainshtein and Lindsey Hughes, who are both much missed.

Some parts of this book were previously discussed in articles, the most significant among them being, 'Released from Her Fetters? Natural Equality in the Work of the Russian Sentimentalist Woman Writer, Mariia Bolotnikova', in *Aspasia: International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History: Women Writers and Intellectuals*, 2008. The anthology *Interdisziplinarität – Intermedialität – Intertextualität* (Interdisciplinarity, Intermediality, Intertextuality) includes my publication 'Parodie als Mittel der poetologischen Selbstbestimmung – Untersuchungen zu Bunina and Pospelova' (Parody as a Means to Poetological Self-Determination: Bunina and Pospelova). The *Newsletter of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia* published my contribution, "'I Will Create Whatever I Want to': Naturalness as a Source of Mastery in the Works of Sentimentalist Women

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<sup>1</sup> Russian Department, University of Exeter, England: The Corinna Project, accessed on 8 December 2014, [www.ex.ac.uk/russian/corinna](http://www.ex.ac.uk/russian/corinna).

Poets'. These publications were instrumental in helping me clarify the thoughts and reflections presented here.

A great source of inspiration was the tireless enthusiasm for transcultural influences in European women's writing shown by Suzan van Dijk, with whom I had the welcome opportunity to co-author 'NEWW: New Approaches to European Women's Writing (before 1900)' for the 2008 edition of *Aspasia*.

Amanda Ewington most kindly permitted me to read the manuscript of her work on Russian women poets of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and gave generous permission to use her translation of the preface and of one poem by Pospelova included in my book. I am grateful to Robert Chandler for referring me to Emily Lygo, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for translating all the other poems under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Daniel Henseler, Carolin Heyder and Ute Stock shared their opinions on my research topic. Professor Hans Badertscher at the Department of Didactics at the University of Bern, Switzerland, generously provided financial support for me to participate in some of these conferences, and gave me leave from teaching for this purpose. I am grateful to John Murray for his emotional support when I was about to embark on an academic career in the UK, and to Katia Terioukova and her family for their hospitality in St Petersburg during my research visits.

My thanks are also due to numerous diligent library staff at the Universities of Exeter and Bern at Unitobler; at the Rare Books and Manuscript Sections of the Russian National Library, at the Institute for Russian Literature (Pushkin House) and the Scientific Library of St Petersburg State University, all in St Petersburg; and at Moscow's Russian State Library.

I am grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation, the University of Zurich's Open Access Publishing Fund and the Gender Equality Commission at the University of Zurich for their financial support of this publication.

Finally, I would like to thank Margret Powell-Joss for her assistance in the editing process and Marlène Thibault for proofreading the manuscript.

While this book was being written, I enjoyed the invaluable emotional and material support of my parents, Hansueli and Milu Stohler, of my husband, Andres von Känel, and of my parents-in-law, Lisi and Edi von Känel, who demonstrated their appreciation



of how much I value academic study by cooking meals for us and spending time with my three wonderful children, twins Benjamin and Raya and their younger brother Leon, allowing me to focus on my research.

This book is dedicated to my children, my husband and my family: You light up my life.

## Note on Conventions

The Appendix reproduces in full those poems that are the object of exhaustive analysis, or which encourage reflection on topics relevant to the argument of my thesis. It includes poems by Mariia Bolotnikova and Anna Naumova which clearly illustrate my argument. As many of Mariia Pospelova's essays and poems are summarised or excerpted in the main text to highlight features which occur in a significant number of her works, only a few of her works are given in the Appendix. The Appendix does not give full quotations of poems by Bolotnikova and Naumova that feature in the main body of this book only to lend weight to a specific aspect of my argument without being analysed in greater detail.

Some of the English translations are taken from Amanda Ewington's *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*; full references are given in footnotes.<sup>1</sup> All other poems, quotations or titles of works have been translated from Russian into English by Emily Lygo.

I have used capital letters for 'Fate' and 'Fortune' to indicate when the words refer to allegories; lower-case letters are used for references to an impersonal force which determines the course of human lives. Moreover, the adjective 'classical' refers to cultural products, including literary works, which give evidence of the humanist foundations of Western European society, while 'Classicist' refers to the literary period known as 'Classicism'.

Quotations in Cyrillic reproduce source-text spelling, regardless of possible deviations from contemporary usage (e.g., Pospelova's spelling of 'истинна', which moreover differs from Naumova's 'истина'). No attempts have been made to harmonise any variant spellings which may occur in a text by the same author (e.g., 'счастье' and 'щастие'). The genitive adjective endings, '-ья' and '-aro' remain unchanged, as does '-зс-' in words such as 'разсуждение'. However, 'hard' signs in words ending in a consonant have been omitted and the pre-Revolutionary letters 'Ъ' and 'І' have been replaced by 'е' and 'и', respectively, turning 'здѣсь' into 'здесь', and 'безмолвіе' into 'безмолвие'.

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<sup>1</sup> Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014.

Transliteration conforms to the Library of Congress system. With the exception of bibliographical references, poem titles and historic transliterations of Russian texts, the older spelling of 'Mar'ia' has been replaced by the more modern (and more easily readable) 'Mariia', and the transliterated forms, 'Aleksandr' and 'Aleksandra', have been replaced by the more common forms, 'Alexander' and 'Alexandra'.

## Introduction

The present study examines the ways in which Russian women writers responded to Sentimentalist literary conventions during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in particular to the notion that women have an inherent affinity with nature, which literary works of the time often presented as an earthly paradise. The study considers particular features in writings by several 18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian women authors including Anna Bunina, Alexandra Khvostova, Anna Volkova, Anna Labzina, Mariia Sushkova, Mariia and Elizaveta Moskvina, Ekaterina Ursusova, Alexandra Murzina, Anna Turchaninova and some of their anonymous colleagues. Particular features in works by non-Russian female writers including Isabella Lickbarrow, Charlotte Smith and, especially, Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde Deshoulières (Mme Deshoulières) also come under scrutiny. Particular attention is paid to works by three women authors who have so far received scant scholarly attention: Mariia Pospelova (1780/1783/1784–1805), Mariia Bolotnikova (dates unknown; published 1817) and Anna Naumova (c.1787–1862). A chapter has been dedicated to each of them.

To contextualise Russian women's writing of the period, I have compared specific aspects with features in works by contemporary male Russian writers, primarily Nikolai Karamzin, but also Iakov Kniazhnin, Mikhail Popov, Ivan Khemnitser, Denis Fonvizin, Nikolai L'vov, Vasilii Zhukovskii, Andrei Bolotov, Mikhail Kherasov, Ivan Dmitriev, Alexander Radishchev, Alexander Sumarokov, Vasilii Trediakovskii, Mikhail Lomonosov and Gavrila Derzhavin. Alongside Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose writings greatly influenced Russian Sentimentalism, other non-Russian male authors relevant to my study include Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, François René de Chateaubriand, John Locke, Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, Charles Bonnet, Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, James Thomson, Edward Young and the Swiss painter and poet, Salomon Gessner.

Rather than attempting to present a comprehensive overview of Russian women's writing in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the study addresses responses to specific Sentimentalist conceptions of writing, nature, and the feminine in the literary discourse of the time. A chapter each is dedicated to Pospelova, Bolotnikova, and Naumova because of their different responses to the broader literary and social constraints and potentials which governed their writing lives. The most important chapter focuses on Naumova's copious and wide-ranging collection of

poems in order to do justice to the complexity, diversity and fascinating nature of her response to Sentimentalist conceptions of writing, nature and the feminine, and to the way in which she addressed topics relating to fate in the emerging Romantic period. In contrast, shorter chapters cover Pospelova's copious but less diverse work and Bolotnikova's writings, which address an intriguing diversity of topics but take up fewer pages than Naumova's.

For the past two decades, Sentimentalist Russian women's writing has commanded a considerable amount of attention. In particular, the feminisation of women's writing subsequent to Karamzin's stylistic reforms has generated a great many works.<sup>1</sup> Studies dedicated to the lives and literary activities of men and women who lived in the provinces have also been published.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Sentimentalist conception of nature as an earthly paradise has been investigated, as has the reception of Rousseau in Russia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed list of works on this topic, see Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> Mary W. Cavender: *Nests of the Gentry. Family, Estate, and Local Loyalties in Provincial Russia*. University of Delaware: Newark 2007;

Catherine Evtuhov: *Portrait of a Russian Province. Economy, Society, and Civilisation in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh PA. 2011;

Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000;

Olga Glagoleva (ed.): *Dvorianstvo, vlast' i obshchestvo v provintsial'noi Rossii XVIII veka*. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie: Moscow 2012;

Olga Glagoleva: *Russkaia provintsial'naia starina. Ocherki kul'tury i byta Tul'skoi gubernii XVIII—pervoi poloviny XIX vekov*. RITM: Tula 1993;

Olga Glagoleva: 'Imaginary World. Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750–1825)'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 129–146;

Laura J. Olson and Svetlana Adonyeva: *The Worlds of Russian Village Women. Tradition, Transgression*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison Wis. 2012;

Hilde Hoogenboom: 'The Importance of Being Provincial. Nineteenth-Century Russian Women Writers and the Countryside'. In: Dowler, Lorraine / Carubia, Josephine / Szczygiel, Bonj (eds): *GenderScapes. Renegotiating, Reinterpreting and Reconfiguring the Moral Landscape*. Routledge: New York 2005, pp. 240–253;

Katherine Pickering Antonova: *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013;

Priscilla Roosevelt: *Life on the Russian Country Estate. A Social and Cultural History*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1995;

Irina Savkina: *Provintsialki russkoi literatury. Zhenskaia proza 30—40 godov XIX veka*. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Lessing Baehr: *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia. Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture*. Stanford University Press: Stanford CA. 1991;

Joachim Klein: *Die Schäferdichtung des russischen Klassizismus*. Harrasowitz: Berlin 1988;

Klaus Garber: *Der locus amoenus und der locus terribilis. Bild und Funktion der Natur in der deutschen Schäfer- und Landlebendichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Böhlau: Köln 1974;

Terry Gifford: *Pastoral*. Routledge: London 1999;

Two aspects which have yet to receive due scholarly attention, however, are the gender connotations of Sentimentalist conceptions of nature, and the way in which they affected the choice of topics by Russian women writers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. My study attempts to close this gap.

Another aspect which has so far escaped scholarly attention is the democratic potential of Sentimentalism as applied to the woman question. Socialist literary studies found at least some revolutionary egalitarian potential in writings from almost any period. In the two decades after the fall of the Socialist regime in the early 1990s, many attempts to explore the implications of democratisation and egalitarianism met with resistance from Russian literary scholars: as one of them pointed out to me, 'we have heard so much about egalitarian potential in literary works, we do not need any more research on this topic.' However, an overlooked aspect is precisely the Sentimentalist egalitarian discourse which encouraged some women — Bolotnikova among them — to raise their voices in criticism of the patriarchal social order and to claim their right to be authors. Moreover, scholarly attention has yet to be directed towards revisions of Sentimentalist gender conceptions as manifested in depictions of nature and the feminine. My chapter on Naumova is of particular interest in this regard; it also addresses literary manifestations of salon culture and divination, which have been the object of important recent studies.<sup>4</sup>

The book is structured as follows: Chapter One discusses Sentimentalist gender concepts and considers their Western origins, in particular Rousseau's paradigms, e.g. his conception of civic virtue; his wish to exclude women from the republic; and his characterisation of women as elements of disorder, the female character of Fate in

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Inna Gorbato: *Formation du concept de Sentimentalisme dans la littérature russe. L'Influence de J.J. Rousseau sur l'œuvre de N.M. Karamzin*. Peter Lang Verlag: Paris 1991;  
 Heidemarie Kesselmann: *Die Idyllen Salomon Gessners im Beziehungsfeld von Ästhetik und Geschichte im 18. Jahrhundert*. Scriptor: Kronberg 1976;  
 Natal'ia Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma. Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniia*. Nauka: St Petersburg 1994;  
 Thomas Newlin: *The Voice in the Garden. Andrei Bolotov and the Anxieties of Russian Pastoral. 1738–1833*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston IL 2001;  
 P. Orlov: *Russkii sentimentalism*. Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta: Moscow 1977;  
 Thomas Barran: *Russia Reads Rousseau*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston IL 2002;  
 Chantal Mustel (ed.): *Rousseau dans le monde russe et soviétique*. Musée Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Montmorency 1995;  
 M. Rozanov: *Zh.Zh. Russo i literaturnoe dvizhenie kontsa XVIII i nachala XIX v. Ocherki po istorii russoizma na zapade i v Rossii*. Tipografiia imperatorskago Moskovskago universiteta: Moscow 1910.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed bibliographical information on Russian salon culture can be found in Chapter Two.

particular. Given that these notions were highly influential across Europe, the chapter also considers their reception in Russia, with a special focus on the concept of a male public sphere and a female private one.

Chapter Two examines the impact of Sentimentalist gender conceptions on Russian literature. It argues that the democratic potential of Sentimentalist discourse shifted formerly marginalised groups such as serfs or women to the centre of literary attention. At the same time it instrumentalised women by requiring them to be virtuous and by equating them with nature conceived of as an earthly paradise. The chapter also explores literary representations of Fate in emerging Romantic literature.

Chapter Three considers the ways in which women authors responded to Sentimentalist notions of nature and writing, arguing that women wishing to be published were expected to be decent, modest, pious and virtuous. Some of them may therefore have felt the need to justify their writerly activities by adopting Sentimentalism's essentialist conceptions of women. One of these notions was women's alleged affinity to nature and estrangement from culture; another was that women were particularly suited to writing as a spontaneous act. Female authors also found subtle ways of challenging Sentimentalist *topoi* such as pastoral gender patterns or representations of Sappho.

Chapter Four examines poems and prose by Pospelova, an author who tended to present her female lyrical persona as an angelic being in harmony with Creation. This can be interpreted as her endorsement of many Sentimentalist literary concepts, including her belief in woman's inherent goodness and assumed affinity with nature.

Chapter Five focuses on works by Bolotnikova, who subverted certain aspects of the value system of Sentimentalist discourse, for instance when referring to a heightened regard for nature in the creation of her self-image as a provincial woman author, or adducing nature as an argument to claim social equality for women.

Chapter Six is dedicated to Naumova, who also espoused the Sentimentalist idealisation of women, particularly when presenting herself as a morally superior being who was therefore entitled to criticise other people's behaviour. She also rejected some Sentimentalist notions about women, however, such as the equation of woman with nature, or the topos of the naive girl who must kill herself for failing to live a virtuous life. Moreover, Naumova questioned and revised the purely negative

connotation of Fate with disorder which transpired from writings by many Sentimentalist poets and political thinkers.

The Sentimentalist period saw an increase both in women writers and in submissions of literary works for publication by non-established, nor even well-educated, women writers. Although none of the three main authors under scrutiny here attained great literary fame, their works nevertheless illustrate the extent to which the literary, cultural and political discourse of the time allowed women writers to create their authorial self-images and express themselves on important aspects of life.

Of the three authors under consideration in this study, Pospelova received the most attention, both from her contemporaries and from scholars. In her day, her precocious talent made her a literary sensation. Recent feminist studies occasionally mention her as a Sentimentalist counter-example to the more neo-Classicist Anna Bunina (1774–1829).<sup>5</sup> Conversely, Bolotnikova, whose writings reflect the view of a provincial woman on specific aspects of the discourse of her time, went all but unnoticed in her time and has received very little critical attention. Finally, although Naumova, a provincial woman author, enjoyed relatively high renown in her provincial town, her work again has received scant critical attention. We know her to have been part of a social network of literary individuals, which placed her in a position to share her views on Sentimentalist and pre-Romantic cultural and literary ideals in a way that eluded Bolotnikova.

My enquiry covers some four decades, from c.1780 to the 1820s, a period when Sentimentalist aesthetic ideals coexisted with neo-Classicist and pre-Romantic ones. With regard to the classification of literary periods, I have adopted the distinction between the terms of ‘trend’ and ‘movement’ suggested by Rudolf Neuhäuser, who argues that, in order to establish the literary profile of a period we must examine its literary trends, several of which may exist in parallel. Neuhäuser considers such a trend to be a ‘movement’ if and when it defines a period’s literary profile. Indeed, he

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<sup>5</sup> Judith Vowles: ‘The “Feminization” of Russian Literature: Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia’. In: Clyman, Toby / Greene, Diana (eds): *Women Writers in Russian Literature*. Praeger: London 1994, pp. 35–60.



postulates a Sentimentalist movement for the period from 1770 until 1790. However, Sentimentalist trends continued on into the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

The scholarly debate on the emergence and decline of Russian Sentimentalism continues. In her work on the period, Natal'ia Kochetkova provides an exhaustive overview of various opinions. Tracing adumbrations of Sentimentalist ideals back to pre-1760s Russian literature, she observes that the likes of K. Nazaretskaia or L. Pastushenko locate the rise of Russian Sentimentalism in the 1760s or 1770s, specifically identifying early indications of Sentimentalist ethics and aesthetics in works by Mikhail Kheraskov (1733–1807), who placed great emphasis on spiritual introspection. Natal'ia Kochetkova considers the 1770s to be the decade in which Sentimentalism became an autonomous literary trend, and the three decades from c.1780 until c.1810 to be the period when Sentimentalism was a literary movement. She further observes a growing interest in European Sentimentalist literature, including the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Jean-François Marmontel (1723–1799), in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is when numerous translations of their works were published.<sup>7</sup>

In his seminal work on 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literature, Joachim Klein examines the rise of the Russian pastoral since the 1750s and the role of non-Russian models in its development. Klein identifies its beginnings in the publication of some of Simeon Polotskii's (1629–1680) works in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in the 1730 translation by Vasilii Trediakovskii (1703–1768) of the description of an imaginary voyage by Paul Tallemant the Younger (1642–1712), *Le voyage et la conquête de l'Isle d'amour* (A Voyage to the Isle of Love<sup>8</sup>) originally published in 1663, followed by love idylls and eclogues by Alexander Sumarokov (1717–1777). By the 1770s, however, Sumarokov-style pastorals were being eclipsed by translations and adaptations of Salomon Gessner's (1730–1788) pastorals. Klein observes further stages in the development of the genre in idylls from the 1820s to 1830s by Nikolai Gnedich (1784–

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<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Neuhäuser: *Towards the Romantic Age. Essays on Sentimental and Preromantic Literature in Russia*. Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Kochetkova 1994, pp. 8, 22.

<sup>8</sup> English translation by Aphra Behn published in 1675, see James J. Bloom: *The Imaginary Sea Voyage. Sailing away in Literature, Legend and Lore*. McFarland: Jefferson N.C. 2013, p. 118.

1833) and Anton Delvig (1798–1831), followed by Nikolai Shcherbin's (1821–1869) idylls published in the 1840s and 1860s.<sup>9</sup>

Now that more women writers are being written into literary history, time frames of literary periods may have to change and the Sentimentalist movement may have to be extended to the 1820s (from the so-far assumed early 1790s) given that many women wrote in a Sentimentalist style during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Having said that, it may prove difficult to identify distinct literary trends in works by Russian women writers, who often continued to emulate aesthetic ideals already abandoned by their better-known male counterparts. For example, *Bednaia Liza* (Poor Liza), a novella by Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826), had appeared in 1792, and excerpts from his *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (Letters of a Russian Traveller) had been published in 1791 and 1792. By the time Pospelova published her works — which exhibit the Sentimentalist belief in an individual's innate goodness — at the turn from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Karamzin had grown sceptical of this view. Evidence of the change can be found in his novella, *Moia ispoved''* (My Confession, 1802), a polemic against Rousseau's *Confessions*.<sup>10</sup>

Pospelova's work represents the epitome of values which Bolotnikova and Naumova were to revise in their writings produced at a time of transition between two strong literary currents and influences. Sentimentalist ideals had already been consigned to the past by the time Bolotnikova's collection of poems appeared in 1817 and Naumova's two years later, in 1819.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the allegorical figure of Fate and elements of folk culture in Naumova's poems adumbrate a Romantic world-view.

Finally, her criticism of many aspects of Sentimentalist aesthetics neatly illustrates Iurii Tynianov's view of literary evolution, which is that emerging writers

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<sup>9</sup> Ioakhim Klein: *Puti kul'turnogo importa. Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka*. Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury: Moscow 2005, pp. 19–23.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Neuhäuser: 'Karamzin's Spiritual Crisis of 1793 and 1794'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin. Russian Man-of-Letters, Political Thinker, Historian. 1766–1826*. Mouton: The Hague 1975, pp. 56–74 (p. 63);

Ilya Serman: 'Chateaubriand et Karamzin, témoins de leur temps'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 701–718 (pp. 706–707);

Iurii Lotman: 'Russo i russkaia kul'tura XVIII veka — nachala XIX veka'. In: Zhan-Zhak Russo: *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie traktaty*. [n.ed.] Nauka: Moscow 1969, pp. 555–604 (p. 583).

<sup>11</sup> Mariia Pospelova: *Luchshie chasy zhizni moei*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Vladimir 1798; Mariia Pospelova: *Nekotorye cherty prirody i istinny, ili ottenki myslei i chuvstv moikh*. Tipografiia senata u Selivanovskago: Moscow 1801;

Mariia Bolotnikova: *Derevenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia*. Tipografiia Reshetnikova: Moscow 1817;

Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaia tipografiia: Moscow 1819.

often take issue with specific aspects of the literary ideals which held sway during their formative years.<sup>12</sup>

This study focuses on the literary genre of the pastoral, exploring topoi and metaphors used by Sentimentalist women writers to create their authorial self-images and to justify their incursion into the male-dominated territory of authorship. If the Classicist attitude to literary genres was quite rigid, Sentimentalism displayed a marginally greater degree of flexibility. In terms of the pastoral, Amanda Ewington argues that women writers welcomed 'the thematic focus on love and virtue, more than the opportunity to experiment with form' practiced by male Sentimentalist authors.<sup>13</sup>

A thematic approach most clearly reveals the intriguing and often surprisingly innovative, not to say somewhat subversive, aspects in Bolotnikova's and Naumova's writings. On the other hand, in the context of this study, discussions of literary quality and formal features such as meter and rhyme are of minor relevance; anyone interested in these issues is therefore referred to Ewington's excellent study on Russian women writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Iurii Tynianov: *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*. Nauka: Moscow 1977, pp. 270–281.

<sup>13</sup> Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ewington's work includes detailed analyses of meter and rhyme in the works of 18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century women's poetry as compared to poetic traditions and to prevalent patterns in works by male authors; see Ewington.

## Chapter One

### Sentimentalist Gender Concepts: Their Western Socio-Political Origins and Their Reception in Russia

This chapter provides some context to prevailing Sentimentalist socio-political assumptions, in particular the division of society into a public and a private sphere. It addresses the concept of civil society, and investigates its relationship to notions on gender, exploring to what extent they shaped representations of fate as a female element of disorder. Initially, the focus will be on Western Europe, in particular on France, with frequent reference to the writings of the philosopher and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), which were of crucial importance in this context. This will be followed by a look at Russian culture and how the Sentimentalist concepts affected it. Finally, differences between the Russian version of Sentimentalist gender concepts and their Western European and French counterparts will be highlighted.

#### Women's exclusion from the republican order

A fundamental feature of Sentimentalist socio-political thinking was the notion that the state should be structured along democratic principles. In 18<sup>th</sup>-century Western Europe, Rousseau was among the chief proponents of the Republican concept and, in his 1762 treatise *Du contrat social* (The Social Contract), outlined the basis for a legitimate political order within a framework of classical republicanism, describing the creation of a civil society through a social contract which protects individuals both from each other and from external danger. Collectively, individuals are the authors of the law. Therefore, by coming together in a civil society, submitting to the authority of the will of the people as a whole, and by abandoning their claims of natural right, individuals can both preserve themselves and remain free.<sup>1</sup>

The republican models which inspired Rousseau's political ideas were a product of Western European culture, including Switzerland and its neighbouring, independent city state of Geneva, where Rousseau was raised. He also drew on the ancient Greek concept of a republican state resurrected by Niccoló Machiavelli (1469–1527), the Italian Renaissance political philosopher.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Du contrat social, ou, principes du droit politique*. Burgelin, Pierre (ed.). Garnier-Flammarion: Paris 1966.

From a feminist point of view, these models describe a civil state based on principles of discrimination and exclusion, and lacking in genuinely democratic foundations. In ancient Greece, for example, neither slaves and nor women were regarded as citizens of the *polis*. Democracy, therefore, is not based on an ideal which ascribes unconditional value to each and every individual; the creators of democracy never intended to establish universal human rights. Patriarchal rule as such was not abolished when it was overturned but was transformed, through fragmentation and redistribution among 'brothers', into a 'fraternal patriarchy'. The public space of society, and the laws underpinning it, came about without women's participation. This conceptual distinction in political thinking on the grounds of biological difference is what Carole Pateman calls 'the sexual contract'. In her ground-breaking study, Pateman posits the existence of a *sexual* contract prior to the emergence of a *social* contract, the sexual contract implying women's subordination to men, and ensuring men's access to women's bodies.<sup>2</sup>

Rousseau's political ideas were a decisive element in the dawning of the French Revolution of 1789. That same year, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen) was proclaimed a major achievement of the new republican order. Women, however, had no political sovereignty, nor did they enjoy the civil protection guaranteed by the document, a fact which illustrates the disjunction of civil rights from women's rights. In response to this omission, the French playwright and political activist, Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793), issued her *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, 1791). Her ideas were unwelcome, however. Accused of counter-revolutionary conspiracy, de Gouges was guillotined two years later, her death obliterating the potential re-orientation of civil society as a political system based on social equality of the sexes.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that women should not be a part of the public sphere was reinforced by Rousseau's concept of the republican order of the state, which strengthened the notion of a society divided into a public domain accessible to men, and a private sphere reserved for women and regarded as an emotional retreat from the ruthless outside world. The republican order of the state, whose cohesion relied on a mutual,

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<sup>2</sup> Carole Pateman: *The Sexual Contract*. Polity Press: Cambridge 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Seidman Trouille: *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment. Women Writers Read Rousseau*. State University Press of New York: New York 1997, p. 243.

voluntary bond among brothers, to the complete exclusion of women, was divorced from the notion of femininity. Jean Bethke Elshtain notes that politics 'is in part an elaborate defence against the tug of the private, against the lure of the familial, against evocations of female power.'<sup>4</sup>

In Rousseau's political writings, woman is perceived as an element of disorder. Uncontrollable, she poses a threat to the order of the republican state. Pateman shows that 'in his essay, *Politics and the Arts*, Rousseau proclaims that "never has a people perished from an excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women."' According to Rousseau, Pateman suggests, women 'have a disorder at their very centres — in their morality ... .'

Writings by men such as Rousseau betray a subliminal fear of woman's sexual appetite and reproductive capacity. Well before Sigmund Freud, Rousseau states that, being but inadequately capable of developing the control mechanism which Freud was to call the 'superego', women cannot sufficiently subdue their passions.

Such fears and notions about women were transferred into the world of politics, a process which Pateman defines as follows:

'The disorder of women' means that they pose a threat to political order and so must be excluded from the public world. Men possess the capacities required for citizenship, in particular they are able to use their reason to sublimate their passions, develop a sense of justice and so uphold the universal, civil law. Women, we learn from the classic texts of contract theory, cannot transcend their bodily natures and sexual passions; women cannot develop such a political morality.<sup>5</sup>

The dichotomy endorsed by numerous republican political theorists resulted in assumptions about manliness which forced politically active men to repress any internal feminine aspects, leading to 'man's inability to tolerate the feminine side of

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain: *Public Man, Private Woman. Women in Social and Political Thought*. Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ 1993, pp. 15–16.

On this topic, see also Linda Zerilli: *Signifying Woman. Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill*. Cornell University Press: London 1994, pp. 16–59.

<sup>5</sup> Carole Pateman: *The Disorder of Women. Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA 1989, pp. 17–18.

his nature — an intolerance projected onto, and helping to constitute, external social forms.'

### **Fate brings disorder to the republic**

One manifestation in the public world of the element of disorder was fate, a concept reflected in many Sentimentalist writings, as I will show in Chapters Two and Six. The following paragraphs summarise the development of the notion of 'fate' in European culture and address its association with the gendered conceptions of republican ideals. Personified as a female character, fate was occasionally called 'Fortune' or 'Destiny'. In antiquity, Fortune was considered to be the deliverer of worldly goods, as Hanna Fenichel Pitkin has shown in her study on the character of Fortune in the writings of Machiavelli. A highly respected goddess, 'directed toward human self-control rather than toward control of the goddess', Fortune's attributes include the cornucopia, a symbol of abundance, as well as a ball or wheel to symbolise her ability to play havoc with human lives.<sup>6</sup> By the early Middle Ages, Christianity had created a hierarchy of the different manifestations of this female character, reducing Destiny and Fortune to mere facilitators of the will of God, omnipotent organiser and ruler of the universe. In the Middle Ages, Fortune was attributed with maternal features; her cult bore resemblances to that of the Virgin. While the Virgin was the perfect mother, however, Fortune was depicted as an evil stepmother. The Virgin is benign and benevolent while Fortune is angry and terrifying, heedless to any prayers which may be offered to her. Men, although terrified of her, make no attempt to fight her or resist the power of her machinations, attempting to learn life's lessons from her instead. It is in this guise that Fortune will appear in Chapter Six dedicated to Naumova.

By the Renaissance, Fortune is an irrational demi-goddess no longer in control of human lives; if she interferes with human endeavour, she must be subjugated. This is why Renaissance depictions of Fortune are far less frightening than Medieval ones. In contrast to the ancient Roman world, where Fortune stood at the helm of ships, symbolising the decisive force which governs the course of human existence, Renaissance iconography shows her 'as the ship's mast, holding the sail, while it is man

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<sup>6</sup> Hanna Fenichel Pitkin: *Fortune is a Woman. Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccoló Machiavelli*. University of California Press: Berkeley 1984, p. 139.

who steers'.<sup>7</sup> The Renaissance doctrine rests upon a gender-specific concept that, rather than attempting to obliterate mere vestiges of a mythical female deity, betrays a deep-seated male fear of the female element equated to disorder. Although it is natural to be upset by and infuriated with the cruel turns and vagaries in our lives, and with their impact on our autonomy, there is no objective reason why life's unpredictability should be represented by female allegories and metaphors.

It was Machiavelli who first introduced sexual connotations when he equated political concepts of the state with manliness, contrasting it with the feminised threat — and symbolic power — exerted by utterly unpredictable Fortune, who can wreak havoc on kingdoms and nation states. She is Circe luring men to their destruction. The gender-specific aspects of Machiavelli's political doctrine translated themselves into his republican ideals, which strongly influenced Rousseau's ideas on the republican order of the state. Machiavelli advocated a clear distinction between the public realm of male civic virtues, including the creation of a civic brotherhood, and the private sphere of female virtues and 'feminine' qualities such as forgiveness, gentleness and compassion. This dichotomy held no room for a symbolic character as unstable and disruptive as Fortune. Since she could not be mastered, it became necessary to summon extraordinarily powerful manifestations of male virtue, understood as civic virtue, in defence.<sup>8</sup>

As Chapter Two will demonstrate, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century such sexual connotations also appear in depictions of Fortune in Russia. Perhaps as an antidote to masculinist tendencies in politics, Sentimentalist men celebrated femininity in cultural domains, literature included. Many aspects of the socio-political ideas which prevailed in Sentimentalism therefore stood in direct opposition to its literary concepts.<sup>9</sup>

In Sentimentalist thought, control of the passions — a requirement for social life — was associated to an essentialist dichotomy projected onto women, who were consequently pressed into the ideal of domestic angel and virtuous being to the

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<sup>7</sup> Pitkin, p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> Elshtain, p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> On the contrast between the masculinity displayed in the public sphere (e.g., university life) and expressions of affection in the private sphere of the family that persisted in Russia until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, see

Rebecca Friedman: *Masculinity, Autocracy, and the Russian University. 1804–1863*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2005, pp. 53–74, 99–124;

Rebecca Friedman: 'From Boys to Men: Manhood in the Nicholaevan University'. In: Clements, Barbara Evans / Friedman, Rebecca / Healey, Dan (eds): *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2002, pp. 33–50.



exclusion of other options, be that participation in civic brotherhood, or disruptive 'madwoman in the attic', to use Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's image.<sup>10</sup>

### **Sentimentalist elevation of the private sphere**

As opposed to the public — exclusively masculine — sphere of politics, the private sphere of the home was thought to be women's natural realm. While the home was indeed understood to be a kind of community, it was, as Pateman observes, above all considered to be a *natural* community which had existed before society had begun to emerge.<sup>11</sup> As women were considered to have a greater affinity to nature than culture, the notion expressed in Rousseau's *Social Contract* confined women even more to the domestic sphere, where civil rights did not apply. As Elshtain states, 'the private realm of feeling and sentiment is not subject to laws and not judged by public standards.'<sup>12</sup> Rousseau's treatise *Émile ou de l'éducation* (Emile, or, on Education, 1762) reflects this attitude. While an essential element in a boy's upbringing was to instil civil virtues so that he might become a responsible citizen, a girl's education aimed at making her the guardian of morals and virtues in the private sphere of her home.<sup>12</sup>

The public space not only created universal laws intended to guarantee security and equality among brothers, but also to stimulate feelings of justice, a civil virtue which women, who remained in the intimate sphere of the home, were denied. Pateman states that

... it is love, not justice, that is the first virtue of the family. The family is a naturally social, not a conventionally social, institution, but justice is a public or conventional virtue.<sup>13</sup>

As Mary Seidman Trouille observes, this was also a result of Rousseau's dictum, according to which women lacked 'the instinct to resist injustice'. Apart from virtue, paternal authority — also believed to be a 'natural' authority — is the only regulator in the intimate space of the home. Any women with access to the public world were

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<sup>10</sup> Sandra Gilbert / Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Pateman 1989, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Émile, ou, de l'éducation*. T. L'Aminot et al (eds). Bordas: Paris 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Pateman 1989, p. 20.

expected to transfer naturalness and honesty — key virtues in Sentimentalist discourse — from the home into the public sphere.<sup>14</sup>

Dena Goodman suggests that the dichotomy between a public sphere accessible to men and a private sphere considered to be women's natural realm of activity may be refined if we apply the paradigm outlined in Jürgen Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, where a distinction is made between a public sphere and an *authentic* public sphere.<sup>15</sup> The public sphere is subject to state authority; it is the realm of the court and the aristocracy and controlled by the police and, despite its claims of responding to the needs of, and being responsible for, the welfare of its subjects, it is far beyond their everyday lives. By contrast, an *authentic* public sphere arises when individuals come together to make public use of their reason — in towns, institutions of sociability and the bourgeois family. Despite some public elements, its existence remains outside the public sphere of the state. It is in the *authentic* public sphere that cells of opposition may emerge against the public sphere of the state, which has excluded many subjects from participating in the exercise of political power. In France the weight of the authentic public sphere increased to the point where it eventually overturned the power of the state.

Joan Landes investigates the place of women in the gender paradigm brought about by the French Revolution,<sup>16</sup> arguing that, in its wake, a gender division emerged in the new social order. Rousseau's celebration of domestic life, and of women's place in this domain, was a crucial element in the theoretical framework which paved the way for the new order.<sup>17</sup> After the Revolution, *salonnières* and ladies at court, who

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<sup>14</sup> Trouille, p. 17; Elshtain, pp. 157–158;

Pateman 1989, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Dena Goodman: 'Public Sphere and Private Life. Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime'. *History and Theory* 31, 1992, pp. 1–20.

Jürgen Habermas: *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Polity: Cambridge 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Joan Landes: *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca 1988.

<sup>17</sup> Applying Habermas' theory to the 'woman question', Goodman suggests a revision of Landes' division in France into a male public space and female private sphere. Following Habermas' distinction, Goodman argues for the existence of a public sphere of the state alongside an authentic public sphere of private gatherings where individuals make public use of reason.

Women were influential in both domains, i.e. in the public sphere when involved in life at court, and in the authentic public sphere when hosting salons from which a culture of intellectual exchange began to emerge and threaten the power of the state. As the post-revolutionary state began to appropriate and dilute the authentic public sphere, however, an important arena of female influence disappeared. Where Goodman disagrees with Landes is in her labelling both *salonnières* and women of the court as women of the public sphere without considering that the former belong to the private realm, of which

under the Ancien Régime had occupied what may be considered public-sphere positions, found themselves expelled from such spheres of public influence, and relegated to the private sphere of the home.

Another way in which the dichotomy between a public sphere of politics and a private sphere of domesticity can be revised is if — as Elshtain suggests — we regard the family as a constituent of culture, rather than an entity opposed to it. From this perspective, home as a place where both men and women are socialised in equal measure ceases to be a sphere that is of secondary relevance to the public sphere of politics. This view contrasts with the notion of the ‘naturally good human being’ posited by Rousseau in order to criticise the path to civilisation his society was travelling on at the time. It is a notion which suggests that enlightenment and progress improve people’s morals. In his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts, 1750), Rousseau claims that the arts and sciences corrupt a human being’s primordial goodness and are therefore harmful to society. From his *Emile* to his *Confessions* (1783), the philosopher adopts as a guiding principle the notion of a human being’s innate goodness combined with an elevated esteem for nature and scepticism towards social institutions.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the influence of Rousseau’s work prevented women from assuming influential positions in the public sphere, instead encouraging them to regard motherhood and domestic life as their main social functions, many women at the time welcomed this shift of focus. The reason for this paradox is that Sentimentalism’s elevated regard for the private sphere gave women a chance to address and give voice to many of the problems they had to cope with, especially when it came to courtship and marriage, which played a very important role in women’s lives. In the absence of other options, marriage was often the only way a woman could acquire material stability or wealth, and could have a significant impact on her mental and physical well-being. In Western Europe, a married man was entitled to be in charge of his wife’s

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the authentic public sphere is a part, while the latter belong to the public sphere of the state. Goodman’s study does not contest the fact, however, that women were eventually expelled from both areas and relegated to domesticity. See Goodman, pp. 1–20.

<sup>18</sup> To illustrate her objection to Rousseau’s ideas on this topic, and to exemplify her view that the family is a fundamental element in the creation of culture, Elshtain refers to the Wild Boy of Aveyron captured in south-western France in 1800 who, having grown up outside human society, had failed to develop any capacity of communicating with other people nor did he display any higher moral standards in his interactions with them. See Elshtain, pp. 298–353; Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. Roger, Jacques (ed.). Garnier-Flammarion: Paris 1971; Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Les Confessions*. Raymond Trousson (ed.). Imprimerie nationale: Paris 1995.

possessions. And so, due to a lack of legal measures which would have called them to account, any husbands who dissipated or lost their wives' property usually went unpunished.

Women also had little control over their reproductive capacities, since a husband was allowed to have unrestricted access to his wife's body, rendering any form of birth control difficult. Women were seriously affected by male adultery, not only in terms of their emotional lives, but also in terms of health risks, for example if a husband infected his wife with a sexually transmitted disease. Many women therefore appreciated Rousseau's ideal of matrimony, which emphasised faithfulness and mutual respect. They also supported the Sentimentalist ideal that men and women should be free to choose their marital partners, since relationships which emerged from natural inclinations were more likely to prevent adultery than marriage based on material interests. At a time when arranged marriages were common and the restrictive private sphere made it difficult for women to escape domestic misery, this promised a considerable improvement of women's lives.

Sentimentalism thus elevated the status of women, providing them with a position which brought them closer to the social esteem afforded to men. Rousseau's ideas promised women positions of considerable social significance — at least apparently so — offering them 'a new dignity as women and a valorisation of *la vie intérieure* (in the double sense of domestic life and affective experience)'.<sup>19</sup>

I will argue in Chapters Four, Five and Six that a further feature of Sentimentalism which appealed to women was the Christian element inherent in this discourse. The Christian value system contains many aspects which elevate women's sphere of existence. Although Christianity is often presented as a faith which has contributed considerably to the oppression of women, it does have strong egalitarian aspects. As Elshtain argues, the emergence of Christianity some two thousand years ago 'ushered in a moral revolution', forcing the ruling elite to justify their claims to power not with regard to tradition alone, but with reference to standards which applied to every individual. At its roots — and in sharp contrast to the heroic ideals supported in the preceding eras of ancient Greece and Rome — Christianity prepared the way for a democratisation of society because it afforded equal value to each and every single human being, from the oppressed, including slaves and women, to the

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<sup>19</sup> Trouille, p. 4.

highest dignitaries. Elshtain further claims that Christianity not only democratised society, but also, and particularly, cherished values which were essential to women and their realm of existence:

Welcomed into that new community, the *res publica Christiana*, woman shared in the norms, activities, and ideals that were its living tissue. She found [...] that qualities most often associated with her activities as a mother — giving birth to and sustaining human life; an ethic of responsibility toward the helpless, the vulnerable, the weak; gentleness, mercy, and compassion — were celebrated.<sup>20</sup>

Sentimentalism's elevated regard for femininity attributed considerable relevance to these values, which were important to women's lives. Pietist ideals emphasising moral purity and charitable activity gained in popularity. However, although empowering to the individual, pietism shares the flaws of similar movements, from Martin Luther's religious reforms to Freemasonry and their belief in the transformative power and influence of virtuous individuals on society, which results in a failure even to attempt to change existing social structures.

### **A comparison of public and private spheres in the West and in Russia**

As we have seen, a typical feature of Sentimentalism is its emphasis on public and private spheres and their clear attribution to gender roles. As in Western Europe, the creation of a public sphere in Russia began with the emergence of an absolutist state, for which Peter the Great (1672–1725) laid the foundation. In 1718 he reformed Moscovite Russia's political landscape by issuing an *ukaz* (edict) announcing the introduction of so-called *assembledei* (assemblies). The sense of equality in these assemblies was a novelty. Rank was of secondary importance; this enabled merchants and craftsmen to participate in these informal gatherings held in private homes, where the entertainment consisted of dancing, drinking, eating and playing games. Moreover, in contrast to Western Europe, women were involved rather than excluded from this (authentic) public sphere. This amounted to a considerable change from the Moscovy patriarchy, where noblewomen had spent their lives mostly segregated from the wider

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<sup>20</sup> Elshtain, pp. 56–61.

social world: Now Russian women became active participants in these forerunners of civil society.<sup>21</sup>

The 18<sup>th</sup> century therefore saw the rise of a vibrant authentic public sphere in Russia, ranging from salons and literary circles to theatres and public university lectures.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Western Europe, however, many of these events were held at palaces or in the gardens of influential individuals. The coffee-house, a characteristic venue for activities in the authentic public sphere in Western Europe, was not typical of Russia. This led visitors to mistakenly deplore the absence of such a public sphere, which in turn was taken as evidence for Russia's social backwardness.

In fact, the authentic public sphere in Russia manifested itself in diverse activities.<sup>23</sup> Public intellectual debates were held at the Academy of Sciences. Clubs such as the St Petersburg English club proved highly popular, as did learned societies such as the Free Economic Society. After the administrative reforms of the provinces, initiated in 1775 by Catherine the Great (1729–1796), similar activities also occurred beyond Russia's main cities. 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russia's expanding print culture is further evidence of the existence of an authentic public sphere.

Women benefited from the growth of the authentic public sphere insofar as it enabled them to participate in social activities such as visits to ballrooms, theatres, gardens, literary circles and learned societies. Literary circles, in particular, provided important arenas for women's social interaction, providing both intellectual stimulus and exchange as well as opportunities to inspect potential marriage partners. Nevertheless, some domains remained off-limits to women, among them most clubs where women were regarded as a distraction; Masonic lodges, an important element of the authentic public sphere; as well as the secret societies and other platforms for political discourse which emerged at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> On this topic, see also Barbara Alpern Engel: *Women in Russia. 1700–2000*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2004, pp. 5–26.

<sup>22</sup> The nature of public and private spheres in Russia is well investigated in Douglas Smith: *Working the Rough Stone. Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb 1999.

<sup>23</sup> They included balls, which were separated into 'aristocratic' balls for an exclusive elite, and 'English' balls to which merchants were admitted. Theatrical, concert and opera performances were no longer reserved to the court and wealthy aristocrats, as had been the case in Moscow, and visits to these venues attracted Russians in increasing numbers. As Smith further suggests, events on stage often mattered less than chatting with other members of the audience. The character of these venues therefore became rather similar to Western European coffee-houses. See Smith, pp. 67–70.

<sup>24</sup> As Smith demonstrates, there were Masonic 'adoption lodges' for women in France. By the time of the French Revolution, any sizeable French city had an adoption lodge. Both there and in England,

In contrast to Western Europe, official 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian policy made deliberate efforts to lower any barriers between the public sphere and the authentic public sphere. In the early days of her reign, Catherine the Great tried to foster civil awareness in her citizens, e.g. in her 'Nakaz' (Instruction) and by summoning representatives to a legislative commission. Her nomination of Ekaterina Dashkova as President of the Academy of Sciences, a key position in the public sphere, further challenged the traditional social order. In the long run, however, these measures failed to diminish the political gap between the authentic public sphere and the public sphere of state and court, not least because favouritism continued to flourish under Catherine the Great, lending additional weight to the public sphere of the court. There were many who felt incapable of exercising any influence in the system, retiring instead to the authentic public sphere and gathering in Masonic lodges and other secret societies, which fostered the egalitarian approach to the practice and celebration of interpersonal and spiritual values denied by official state institutions.

Similar to France, there were cells of opposition in the authentic public sphere seeking to abolish absolutist monarchy. And similar to the French Jacobin regime in late-18<sup>th</sup>-century France, the crown's response to the failed Decembrist uprising of 1825 was to impose severe restrictions on the authentic public sphere, albeit less violently so. The policies of Nicholas I (1796–1855) were designed to restrict and mould the private realm to conform to the public sphere, where he proclaimed the fundamental elements of his rule: 'pravoslavie' (orthodoxy), 'samoderzhavie' (autocracy), and 'narodnost'' (nationality).

The strong emphasis of Russian Sentimentalist ethics on friendship, and the idea that marriage, i.e. the husband-wife relationship, should be based on reciprocity of feelings, ran counter to traditional 18<sup>th</sup>-century conceptions of marriage which placed family interests above those of the individual.<sup>25</sup> Traditionally, a woman's primordial duty was to marry and produce children; a mother's important task was to

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although 'women Masons were never allowed to meet without the supervision of their male counterparts', these institutions developed into forums where women's social inequality was discussed. Three adoption lodges seem to have operated in Russia, about which, however, little is known; see Smith, pp. 28–30.

<sup>25</sup> See Jessica Turov: *The Russian Noble Family. Structure and Change*. Garland Publishing: New York 1987.

On the egalitarian potential of Sentimentalist conceptions of friendship within marriage, see also Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, pp. 46–47.

find a husband for her daughter; in turn, the daughter was expected to accept her mother's choice. As it was generally believed that marriage would eventually lead to love, emotional fulfilment at the outset was of secondary importance. Although Peter the Great had outlawed the practice of forcing women into marriage in 1722, the aristocracy's persistent sense of authority and hierarchy meant that countless women found themselves having to accept arranged marriages.<sup>26</sup>

Just as in the West, marriage had a considerable impact on a Russian noblewoman's life. Although promising her access to a wider range of social activities and a higher status than a spinster's, marriage did not offer her the independence she might have dreamt of while suffering her father's authoritarian rule. A married woman was legally obliged to obey her husband. In the new family, she usually also came under her mother-in-law's supervision and she was expected to prove her virtue by suffering the husband's infidelities — if and when they occurred — in silence. Rousseau's call that spouses should be respectful of and faithful to each other, and the Sentimentalist idea that marriage should be based on reciprocated feelings promised to bring considerable change to women's lives in Russia. Bolotnikova's and Naumova's writings contain intriguing reflections on the topic, on which I will expand in Chapters Five and Six.

While the Western European home and its private sphere were regarded as a woman's natural domain, an idea made increasingly popular through Rousseau's writings, the position of the home in Russian culture requires a more differentiated approach.<sup>27</sup> As Jessica Tovrov argues, despite gender divisions in Russian society, the home was a place where private and public spheres overlapped. And, just as Elshtain suggests, the family was regarded as an integral part of Russian culture. This is in contrast to Rousseau's perception of the family as a natural entity outside society. Aristocratic Russian women had significant opportunities to interact with people and institutions beyond the confines of the home. To a great extent, this was due to the fact that, as Michelle Lamarche Marrese's study demonstrates, they were entitled to

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<sup>26</sup> Arranged marriages remained the norm until well into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially among townspeople and peasants. By then, members of the aristocracy, however, enjoyed greater freedom in the choice of their spouses; see Barbara Alpern Engel: *Breaking the Ties That Bound. The Politics of Marital Strife in Late Imperial Russia*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca 2011, pp. 49–51.

<sup>27</sup> For differences in the concept of the home between Western and Eastern Europe, see also Barbara Evans Clements: *A History of Women in Russia. From Earliest Times to the Present*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 2012, pp. 89.



own property.<sup>28</sup> From 1753 onwards, Russian noblewomen were permitted to sell their estate without their husband's consent. As a result, many of them managed their own estates, supervising industrial production and playing an active role in the economy by buying and selling property. It was normal for spouses to be in control of their own properties, and very common for them to spend considerable periods of time apart to manage their respective estates. It was also not uncommon for men employed in state service in the major cities to have their wives manage their country estates. Women's right to control property led to fewer restrictions than in the West in terms of which spheres of existence were considered appropriate for men and women.

As Marrese argues, women in Western Europe tended to pay considerable attention to household goods, clothing, and valuable items; theirs was a female identity which, in the absence of other options of owning property, relied heavily on these kinds of material possessions. In contrast, the ideals of female domesticity which began to spread across Russia by means of advice literature and many works of fiction, including Western writings such as Rousseau's, were at odds with Russian women's legal right to own property and with the expectation that women should look after their estates in order to provide an income for their children.

This is not to say that women's right to own property never conflicted with society's patriarchal structure. Many women only actively engaged in property transactions as widows. Nor were husbands prevented from encroaching upon their wives' properties by running their estates into the ground or gambling them away, as demonstrated in the examples of Anna Labzina (1758–1828) at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or that of Karolina Pavlova (1807–1893) in 1852.<sup>29</sup> It did, however, give

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<sup>28</sup> Michelle Lamarche Marrese: *A Woman's Kingdom. Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia. 1700–1861*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca 2002. See also Judith Vowles: 'Marriage a la russe'. In: Costlow, Jane T. / Sandler, Stephanie / Vowles, Judith (eds): *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*. Stanford University Press: Stanford 1993, pp. 53–72; Robin Bisha et al. (eds): *Russian Women, 1698–1917. Experience and Expression*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 2002, pp. 58–107; Clements, pp. 38–9, 79–80.

For an example of a Russian gentlewoman living in the second half of the 19th century who seems to have been in charge of estate management as a matter of course, see Katherine Pickering Antonova's extensive study on this topic, in particular the chapters: 'Estate Management' and 'Domesticity and Motherhood', in: *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013, pp. 74–94, 136–156.

Antonova emphasises the contrast between the reality of Russian provincial gentlewomen and Western rhetoric about female domesticity, widely known in the Russian provinces at the time.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Labzina: 'Vospominaniia. Opisanie zhizni odnoi blagorodnoi zhenshchiny'. In: Bokova, B. (ed.): *Istoriia zhizni blagorodnoi zhenshchiny*. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie: Moscow 1996, pp. 15–88 (p. 55); Alexander Lehrman: 'A Chronology of Karolina Pavlova's Life'. In: Fusso, Susanne / Lehrman, Alexander

women a legal entitlement to claim control of their own property, which some women pursued in court.

Russian culture had therefore developed in a way which empowered women, including them in society rather than excluding them. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century this empowerment was jeopardised by Rousseau's ideal of female education which restricted women to representing domesticity and being dependent on male authority. Labzina's example, which I will expand upon below, illustrates how Rousseau's influence threatened to reverse a progressive feature of Russian society, i.e. female authority in both the public and the private spheres.<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that Russian women's responsibilities as estate managers may well have put them in charge of financial matters, giving them opportunities to interact with a great number of people. However, as I will discuss in Chapter Two, women — especially if they lived in the provinces — also needed and wanted reading material to open a window on the world beyond their estates. By reading texts written far from their estates (even abroad), publishing their own works and making them accessible to a wide readership, these women managed to escape domesticity, either in the narrower sense of the family circle, or the wider one of their estates. However, just because aristocratic Russian women bore economic responsibilities, they were not necessarily free to access the more intellectual domains of life.<sup>31</sup>

### Egalitarian principles in Sentimentalist discourse

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(eds): *Essays on Karolina Pavlova*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston IL 2001, pp. 251–263 (p. 257).

<sup>30</sup> On Labzina in the context of Sentimentalist ideals, see also Elisabeth Vogel: 'Zur diskursiven Verhandlung empfindsamer Konzepte. Am Beispiel von Nikolai Karamzins *Briefe eines russischen Reisenden* und Anna Labzinas *Erinnerungen*'. In: Cheauré, Elisabeth / Heyder, Carolin (eds): *Russische Kultur und Gender Studies*. Berlin Verlag: Berlin 2002, pp. 149–172; and Irina Savkina: *Razgovory s zerkalom i zazerkal'em. Avtodokumental'nye zhenskie teksty v russkoi literature pervoi poloviny XIX veka*. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie: Moscow 2007, p. 75.

Savkina argues that Labzina eventually managed to subvert the role of a submissive woman imposed on her when she made public her experiences, disclosing the clash between Sentimentalist ideals of femininity and the reality of women's daily lives.

On the persistence of the ideal of women's domestic role in Russia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as manifested in advice literature, see Diana Greene: 'Mid-Nineteenth-Century Domestic Ideology in Russia'. In: Marsh, Rosalind (ed.): *Women and Russian Culture. Projections and Self-Perceptions*. Berghahn: New York 1998, pp. 78–97.

<sup>31</sup> This becomes particularly clear in the example provided by Antonova. Here, the father of a genteel provincial family regards education as an intellectual domain which reaches beyond the private realm to provide a connection with the outside world, and takes charge of his children's education. See Antonova, pp. 157–181; see also Glagoleva 2000, p. 68.

As I have outlined, a crucial element to Sentimentalist socio-political ideas was the creation of a public sphere of civil laws for men, and a private sphere of feelings which was thought to be women's natural domain. Another fundamental feature of Sentimentalist discourse was the emphasis on egalitarianism and belief in the unconditional value of all human beings. Bolotnikova, whose writings I will discuss in Chapter Five, refers to these notions.

In Russia, the concept questioned the legitimacy of a social system based on serfdom, and led to discussions about women's social equality. However, these discussions did not fundamentally challenge the paradigm of gender-separate spheres of existence. The importance of egalitarian concepts in Russian Sentimentalism manifested itself in the tendency of the ruling class to show a strong sensitivity to democratic ideas and class distinctions — to a great extent a legacy of the ethical principles of the Enlightenment. In particular, the belief that progress and educational institutions were beneficial became very popular. It was contrary to Rousseau's cultural scepticism, and related to the fact that 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russia was still struggling to overcome cultural 'backwardness' in comparison with Western Europe. Russians espoused some of Rousseau's concepts (such as the worship of nature) while rejecting or ignoring others. The relevance of progress and education clearly emerges from Catherine the Great's political agenda. Belief in their usefulness was so profound that they soon began to trickle down to the lower classes of Russian society. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many members of the aristocracy had established institutions to provide education for serfs and peasants alike. The poet Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783–1852), for example, was reported to have educated and liberated his servant, while Nikolai Novikov (1744–1818) supported a school open to children from all classes of society; journals published numerous similar accounts held up as exemplary.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Natal'ia Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma. Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniiia*. Nauka: St Petersburg 1994, p. 16;

Thomas Barran: *Russia Reads Rousseau*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston IL 2002;

Natalia Kochetkova: 'Zur Idee des Fortschritts in der Literatur des russischen Sentimentalismus'. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 39, 1994, pp. 405–412;

Catharine Ciepiela: 'Reading Russian Pastoral. Zhukovsky's Translation of Gray's Elegy'. In: Sandler, Stephanie (ed.): *Rereading Russian Poetry*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1999, pp. 31–57 (p. 43).

For an interpretation of Urusova's 'Polion' as a polemic against Rousseau's criticism of culture, see Marcus C. Levitt: 'The Polemic with Rousseau over Gender and Sociability in E.S. Urusova's *Polion* (1774)'. *The Russian Review* 66, 2007, pp. 586–601.

On the progressive and the conservative interpretations of the Sentimentalist notion of equality, see also Iurii D. Levin: *The Perception of English Literature in Russia. Investigations and Materials*. Catherine Philips (transl.). Astra: Nottingham 1994, pp. 159–160.

In addition to the popularity of the notions of progress and education, many of these altruistic acts were due to the (egalitarian) Sentimentalist notion of compassion. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a Sentimentalist was considered to be compassionate, humane and philanthropic. True to form, the Freemasons considered moral perfection to be within reach of every human being, regardless of their level of education or social class. Masonic journals published reports, for instance, about peasants saving their neighbours from house fires, demonstrating that even the ostensibly ignorant could be magnanimous. Many Freemasons were philanthropists. When famine threatened, Rousseau-inspired Novikov, for example, stocked granaries for the peasant population.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the Sentimentalist conception of compassion was often patronising and did not genuinely aim at changing the status quo. Prevailing notions of virtue required people to accept a given situation. In fact, to do so was considered particularly virtuous, causing people to abandon any thoughts of improvement. This neutralized any threats of political uprising or criticism of the gender order which could have arisen from increasing demands for social equality. The patronising nature of Sentimentalist compassion is most clearly visible in Sentimentalist attitudes to serfdom. Believing that society would improve through enhanced attention to each individual's spiritual life, the Freemasons engaged in charitable activities to reduce the misery of the serfs without condemning the institution of serfdom. For all his idealisation of a peasant's emotional capacities in works such as *Bednaia Liza* (Poor Liza) or *Frol Silin*, Karamzin still supported the institution of serfdom, and considered his Plato-inspired republican ideals mainly a fascinating utopia.

The writer Vladimir Izmailov felt pity for the members of disadvantaged social groups, but did not approve of the idea that serfs should acquire wealth, let alone transcend their social position. Instead, his sympathies were directed towards impoverished representatives of the gentry. Andrei Bolotov (1738–1833) expressed pity for oppressed members of society in his writings, but did so mostly to thank God

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<sup>33</sup> Kochetkova 1994, pp. 18–19, 62–63;

V. Stepanov: 'Povest' Karamzina *Frol Silin*'. In: Berkov, V. (ed.): *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII—nachala XIX veka*. Nauka: Leningrad 1969, pp. 229–244 (p. 233);

Inna Gorbato: *Formation du concept de Sentimentalisme dans la littérature russe. L'Influence de J.J. Rousseau sur l'œuvre de N.M. Karamzin*. Peter Lang Verlag: Paris 1991, p. 42.

Anna Kuxhausen observes similar efforts to promote the idea of empathy in educational texts of that time. Anna Kuxhausen: *From the Womb to the Body Politic. Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 2013, pp. 114–117.

for not having made him one of them. Zhukovskii's ambivalent views regarding serfdom led him to advocate (and put into practice) education for the serfs, while, at the same time, warning his contemporaries of the dangers which might result from subsequent demands for social freedom. The idealisation of compassion turns out to a great extent to be a self-congratulatory gesture, which in many cases may have served as a means of assuaging the guilty conscience of the privileged classes. As a result, it was as likely to reinforce as much as question the existing social order.<sup>34</sup>

In Russia as well as in Western Europe, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars led to a desire to improve the conditions of the poor in order to forestall social unrest. This explains why even those Russian aristocrats who argued that serfdom should be abolished often had no intention of changing power relations in society, as Thomas Newlin's investigation of this question shows. Why were they so concerned about the living conditions of the serfs? Rather than the desire to generate social equality, it was the fear that the oppressed might some day rise and take revenge. An excerpt from Alexander Bakunin's 'Agreement Between Landlord and Peasant' of 1803 reveals this attitude:

Отречение от всех насильственных прав не уменьшит но утвердит  
законную власть помещика, и каждый куст не будет угрожать ему  
истреблением.

*Being severed from all rights will not diminish but will confirm the lawful right of  
the landowner, and it will not be that every bush threatens him with  
destruction.*<sup>35</sup>

Once serfdom was abolished, people would still be working for their landowners, yet they would do so out of their own free will, not because the system forced them.

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<sup>34</sup> Kochetkova 1994, pp. 58–74;

Stepanov, p. 233;

Iurii Lotman: *Izbrannye stat'i*. 3 vols. Aleksandra: Tallin 1992, Vol. II, pp. 162–163;

Ciepiela, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Bakunin: 'Usloviia pomeshchika s krest'ianinom' quoted in Thomas Newlin, *The Voice in the Garden: Andrei Bolotov and the Anxieties of Russian Pastoral (1738–1833)*, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. 99 (in English), p. 227 (in Russian).

One of the reasons why, in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, so many members of the aristocracy began to feel compassion for the serfs was a sense of guilt for the advantages which came with their social position. After 1762, the landowners' privileged situation became even more evident among the aristocrats who retired to their estates once Peter III (1728–1762) had released the nobility from state service. Although the rate of retirement did not increase dramatically, emerging Sentimentalist ethics contributed to the popularity of an ideal which appealed to those who wished to retire to 'cultivate their gardens', in the words of French philosopher François Voltaire. There is, Newlin suggests, both a literal and a symbolic meaning to this expression. It implies that one should 'withdraw inward and homeward, into the self, into the family, into the benign, quiet, familiar landscape of the estate'.<sup>36</sup> The aristocracy's retreat from the public life of state service to the privacy of their own land forced them to face the different ways in which different classes of society lived on their estates. They had to come to terms with the reality of serfdom, which presented itself to them in a much cruder form than when they had lived in the city. Little wonder, then, that attitudes towards serfdom were ambivalent.

Despite these controversial views, republican ideals circulated widely in Russia during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Napoleon's *Code Civil*, introduced in 1804, had given a taste to Frenchmen interested in egalitarian political principles. During the ensuing two decades, the Decembrists, eager to introduce similar concepts in Russia, were preparing their *coup d'état*. Concepts of universal civil rights began to be a topic for discussion in various groups of society, particularly amongst the members of the army who had spent time in France after Napoleon's campaign against Russia. Terms such as 'zakon', 'prestuplen'e', 'vol'nost'', 'tiran', 'tsepi', 'raby', 'svoboda', and 'okovy' (crime, freedom, tyrant, chains, slaves, liberty, fetters) became a part of the vocabulary in these debates, and served as signal words in Decembrist poetry.<sup>37</sup>

As a consequence of this political climate, the 'woman question' became a hotly debated issue during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Grigorii Tishkin's study demonstrates, even though the Napoleonic Code was reactionary in

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<sup>36</sup> Newlin, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Lidiia Ginzburg: 'Russkaia lirika 1820—1830-kh godov'. In: Ginzburg, Lidiia (ed.): *Poety 1820—1830-kh godov*. Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1961, pp. 13–14, 20; Brodskii, N.: *Literaturnye salony i krushki. Pervaia polovina XIX veka*. Academia: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, pp. 68–69, 142.

this matter.<sup>38</sup> According to debates held in journals, criticism of the patriarchal structure of society had already arisen in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russia. It was believed that men's greater physical strength was the cause of the social inequality of women, whose need for male protection was undisputed. The fact that sexual difference should have resulted in social oppression, however, was condemned as unbecoming to an enlightened society. By propagating culture, morals and knowledge, women were to be enabled to achieve social equality with men. This view was reflected in contributions in journals which tried to answer questions about whether men or women were more useful; the privilege usually went to women because of their ability to give birth.

The Decembrists, too, considered the role of the female sex in the new order of society, even though the political nature of their circles meant that women were not admitted. Decembrists such as Nikolai Kriukov, however, declared that the minds of men and women were completely equal, and that any social differences between the sexes were a consequence of education. Nevertheless, the Decembrists had no intention of granting civil rights to women nor of regarding them as equal members in the new social system. The tendency was to reduce women to the traditional tasks of motherhood, charitable actions, and embodiment of virtues and good morals. Sentimentalism made too strong a link between calls for equality between the sexes and the celebration of female virtue to allow the Decembrists to envisage fundamental changes in the social roles of the sexes.<sup>39</sup>

The Sentimentalist notion of innate goodness, a fundamental feature of Rousseau's thought system, which became very popular in late-18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, was particularly detrimental to the achievement of social equality between men and women. On a social level, this fascination was reflected in

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<sup>38</sup> Grigorii Tishkin: 'Zhenskii vopros i pisatel'skii trud na rubezhe XVIII—XIX vekov'. In: Fainshtein, Mikhail (ed.): *Russkie pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII—pervoi treti XX vv.* Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1995, pp. 29–42. Napoleon is said to have intervened personally in the *Code Civil* in order to restore the husband's authority over his wife.

<sup>39</sup> Tishkin, pp. 31–34;

Mikhail Fainshtein: 'Litsom k litsu. "Zhenskaia tema" v proizvedeniakh pisatel'nits Rossii i Germanii na rubezhe XIX i XX vv.'. In: Ganelin, R. (ed.): *O blagorodstve i preimushchestve zhenskogo pola. Iz istorii zhenskogo voprosa v Rossii.* Sankt-Peterburgskaia Gosudarstvennaia Akademiia Kul'tury: St Petersburg 1997, pp. 110–116.

Further examples of polemics about the roles of men and women that appeared in the press during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be found in Yael Harussi: 'Women's Social Roles as Depicted by Women Writers in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Fiction'. In: Clayton, J. Douglas (ed.): *Issues in Russian Literature Before 1917.* Slavica Publishers: Columbus 1989, pp. 33–48.

pedagogical experiments aimed at the creation of a natural, and therefore morally good, human being. The ideal object for this kind of experiment was what Iurii Lotman has termed the 'child-woman', a *tabula rasa* or clean slate in a double sense due to her being excluded from the allegedly corrupting influences of civilisation both as a woman and as a child.<sup>40</sup>

Labzina, for example, spent some years of her youth in the house of poet and Freemason Mikhail Kheraskov, where she was deliberately kept in a state of ignorance and isolation in order for her innate goodness to be preserved. Like a child, this young married woman was expected to share every thought with her educators, a fact which is most revealing of the Sentimentalist image of women. The example also demonstrates that the concept of innate goodness was a gendered one and was chiefly projected onto women. By contrast, men were regarded as generally failing in their attempts to be morally good, and therefore 'condemned' to live in a state of corruption. In other words, a man could choose whether or not he wanted to adopt and emulate the idea of innate goodness, while women, thought to be endowed with natural goodness, were unable to escape.

Kheraskov's treatment of Labzina reflects his idea of woman's innate goodness and educational ignorance. In contrast, influenced by the teachings of St Augustine, he and his fellow Freemasons believed in Original Sin, meaning that man was born corrupt and therefore in need of continuous moral instruction if he wished to achieve goodness and restore his original state of innocence. The Freemasons held that man was a 'rough stone' which had to be cut and polished, whereas woman was already as virtuous as man wished to become. To achieve moral perfection, therefore, woman did not require the same degree of culture and education as man.

## Summary

Chapter One outlined some of the foundations of Sentimentalism and its reception in Russia. Chiefly due to Rousseau's influence, ancient and medieval Western ideas reached Russia during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Together with the Sentimentalist ideal of female domesticity, the exclusion of women from the public sphere is based on a fear of the female element, which is thought to bring disorder to

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<sup>40</sup> Iurii Lotman: *Russlands Adel. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Peter I. bis Nikolaus I.* Böhlau: Köln 1997, p. 329–344.



the republican brotherhood. The fear manifests itself in associations of Fate with the female, found repeatedly in Western and Russian cultural history.

By the time Rousseau's ideas reached Russia, the country had undergone a process of Westernisation in the course of which women were encouraged to participate in the (authentic) public sphere. However, the concept of a division of society into a public sphere reserved for men and a private one for women does not necessarily apply to all aspects of Russian society, where the family was regarded as belonging to the authentic public sphere. Moreover, in their role as estate managers, many Russian women were active in both the public and the private spheres.

The Sentimentalist ideal of female domesticity threatened to reverse this progressive feature of Russian society. Nevertheless, the symbolic elevation of women in Rousseau's writings appealed to many women, both in Russia and in the West. An important element of the Russian reception of Western Sentimentalism in the style of Rousseau was the religious component and its egalitarian conception. In general, Sentimentalism in Russia produced many debates on egalitarian aspects of society, including the question of serfdom, Decembrist calls for an egalitarian order of the state, and the woman question. However, the Sentimentalist fascination with alleged human primordial goodness risked having a negative impact on women, who served as its main objects of projection and were therefore threatened by exclusion from the public sphere of culture and education.

## Chapter Two

### Literary Impacts of Sentimentalist Gender Conceptions in Russia

This chapter addresses literary implications of Sentimentalism's socio-political concepts. It suggests that literature and its ability to transfer issues from the domestic sphere to the public world was potentially able to bridge the gap between the sexes' separate spheres of existence. Salons and literary circles in particular played the role of intermediary between the two spheres of activity, since they were a place of cultural exchange for both sexes, and associated with both the public and the private spheres. The chapter further considers representations of Fate in Russian Romantic literature, which began to emerge in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### The feminisation of literary culture

In contrast to Classicist aesthetics, Sentimentalist discourse was descriptive rather than normative, thus broadening the horizon to groups of society previously ignored by the ruling class. One of the consequences was the appearance of the character of the serf and the rise of the 'woman question' in many literary works. Another effect was the high regard in which femininity was held in Sentimentalism, becoming a cultural standard: as scholars have shown, style, language, and genre were adapted to what male writers thought to be pleasing to and customary among women. A smooth type of diction replaced the complicated syntactic structures influenced by Church Slavonic; words borrowed from French began to crop up in Russian texts; and novels and minor poetic genres, such as madrigals, idylls, eclogues, or rondeaus, were given preference to epic works and drama. A further result of the cultural phenomenon of 'feminisation' in Sentimentalism was that it became possible to think of women as readers as well as contributors to journals, and, to some extent, as authors of literary works. Feminist scholars have found that publishing remained a male domain, however, and that men tended to publish women's writings regardless of quality. This is why the Sentimentalist 'feminisation' of culture confined women in essentialist conceptions, traditional gender patterns, and the roles of amateur or dilettante, rather than allowing them to develop into professional writers.<sup>1</sup> Strongly influenced by French

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Rosslyn: 'Making their Way into Print. Poems by Eighteenth-Century Russian Women'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, 2000, pp. 407–438;  
Gitta Hammarberg: 'Women, Critics and Women Critics in Early Russian Women's Journals'. In: Rosslyn,

literary models, Sentimentalist literature also projected the notion of goodness onto women. As a result, female literary characters had to die if and when they could no longer embody virtue. The conception was associated with Sentimentalism's idealisation of nature and a belief in women's greater affinity with nature than with culture, which manifested itself particularly clearly in the gender patterns of the pastoral.

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- Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 187–207;
- Judith Vowles: 'The "Feminization" of Russian Literature. Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: Clyman, Toby / Greene, Diana (eds): *Women Writers in Russian Literature*. Praeger: London 1994, pp. 35–60;
- Gitta Hammarberg: 'The Feminine Chronotope and Sentimentalist Canon Formation'. In: Cross, Anthony / Smith, Gerald (eds): *Literature, Lives, and Legality in Catherine's Russia*. Astra: Cotgrave 1994, pp. 103–120;
- Gitta Hammarberg: 'Reading à la mode. The First Russian Women's Journals'. In: Klein, Joachim et al. (eds): *Reflections on Russia in the Eighteenth Century*. Böhlau: Köln 2001, pp. 218–232;
- Wendy Rosslyn: 'Anna Bunina's "Unchaste Relationship with the Muses". Patronage, the Market and the Woman Writer in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 74, 1996, pp. 223–242;
- Wendy Rosslyn: *Anna Bunina (1774–1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry in Russia*. Mellen: Lewiston 1997;
- Karolin Khaider: "'V sei knizhke est' chto-to zanimatel'noe, no...": Vospriatie russkikh pisatel'nits v *Damskom zhurnale*'. In: Shore, Elisabeth (ed.): *Pol. Gender. Kul'tura. Nemetskie i russkie issledovaniia. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Gumanitarnyi Universitet: Moscow 2000*, pp. 131–153;
- Carolyn Heyder / Arja Rosenholm: 'Feminization as Functionalisation. The Presentation of Femininity by the Sentimentalist Man'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 51–71;
- Viktor Zhivov: 'Literaturnyi iazyk i iazyk literatury v Rossii XVIII stoletii'. *Russian Literature. Special Issue. 18<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature* 52, 2002, pp. 1–53;
- Wendy Rosslyn: 'Zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Privatleben. Frauen und ihre Schriften im achtzehnten und frühen neunzehnten Jahrhundert in Russland'. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 41–59;
- Gitta Hammarberg: 'Gender Ambivalence and Genre Anomalies in Late 18<sup>th</sup>—Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature'. In: *Russian Literature. Special Issue. 18<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature* 52, 2002, pp. 299–326;
- Carolyn Heyder: 'Vom Journal für die Lieben zur Sache der Frau. Zum Frauenbild in den russischen literarischen Frauenzeitschriften des 19. Jahrhunderts'. In: Parnell, Christina (ed.): *Frauenbilder und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe in der russischen Frauenprosa. Materialien des wissenschaftlichen Symposiums in Erfurt 1995*. Peter Lang Verlag: New York 1996, pp. 63–75;
- Gerda Achinger: 'Das gespaltene Ich – Äusserungen zur Problematik des weiblichen Schreibens bei Anna Petrovna Bunina'. In: Parnell, Christina (ed.): *Frauenbilder und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe in der russischen Frauenprosa. Materialien des wissenschaftlichen Symposiums in Erfurt 1995*. Peter Lang Verlag: Frankfurt a.M. 1996, pp. 43–61;
- Arja Rosenholm / Irina Savkina: "'How Women Should Write". Russian Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Lives and Culture*. Open Book Publishers: Cambridge 2012, pp. 161–207;
- Gitta Hammarberg: 'The First Russian Women's Journals and the Construction of the Reader'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 83–104;
- Joe Andrew: "'A Crocodile in Flannel or a Dancing Monkey". The Image of the Russian Woman Writer. 1790–1850'. In: Edmondson, Linda (ed.): *Gender in Russian History and Culture*. Palgrave: Basingstoke 2001, pp. 52–72;
- Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, pp. 1–28.

Notwithstanding a discourse which conceptualised them as beings estranged from culture, girls and women increasingly began to be a part of 18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural life in Russia. This is reflected, for instance, in girls' increasing educational opportunities. In the 1780s Catherine the Great initiated the creation of a nationwide network of schools, which included the provinces, making at least some education available there, even though most families continued to send their children away to the major cities for their education.<sup>2</sup> In addition, several boarding schools for girls were created across the Empire. Catherine the Great set up the *Smol'ny* Institute, an exemplary boarding school for young girls of noble extraction.<sup>3</sup> In the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the empress Mariia Fedorovna, who had assumed responsibility of the *Smol'ny* Institute, initiated and established many more educational institutions. After the French Revolution, members of the French aristocracy arrived in Russia, where they set up private pensions, chiefly in the major cities.<sup>4</sup> Boarding schools not only provided girls with an education, but could also serve as cultural venues. Most men or women who ran boarding schools were well-known and highly regarded people with a wide circle of acquaintances. For 1819, for instance, N. Brodskii mentions a boarding school in St Petersburg run by a French nobleman who also organised literary evenings in which women were able to participate.<sup>5</sup> By providing a mixed-sex venue for literary evenings and similar events, boarding schools contributed to the revision of the notion stipulated by Sentimentalism's division of

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<sup>2</sup> Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, pp. 11–12.

<sup>3</sup> To some extent, the *Smol'ny* was inspired by the activities of Mme de Maintenon, the second wife of French king Louis XIV, who in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France had founded a boarding school for impoverished noble girls. Catherine did not, however, adopt Mme de Maintenon's institution's devotional orientation; see Anna Kuxhausen: *From the Womb to the Body Politic. Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 2013, pp. 140–143;

Christa Ebert: 'Erziehung des idealen Menschen? Das Smol'ny-Institut – Katharinas Modellversuch für Frauenbildung in Russland'. In: Lehmann-Carli, Gabriela / Schippan, Michael / Scholz, Birgit / Brohm, Silke (eds): *Russische Aufklärungsrezeption im Kontext offizieller Bildungskonzepte (1700–1825)*. Berlin Verlag: Berlin 2001, pp. 261–268;

Robin Bisha et al. (eds): *Russian Women. 1698–1917. Experience and Expression*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 2002, pp. 159–231.

E. Likhacheva observes that while educational opportunities for women of the aristocracy as well as towns- and lower-class women were improving, they were still falling short, see E. Likhacheva: *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskago obrazovaniia v Rossii. 1796–1828. Vremia Imperatritsy Marii Fedorovny*. Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha: St Petersburg 1893, pp. 250–301.

<sup>4</sup> Natal'ia Pushkareva, 'Russian Noblemen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18<sup>th</sup>- and Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Memoirs'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 111–128 (113).

<sup>5</sup> N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki. Pervaia polovina XIX veka*. Academia: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, pp. 81–87.

society into a male public and a female private sphere, that women should not become involved in public matters. I will provide an example for this phenomenon in Chapter Six on Naumova.

In late-18<sup>th</sup> - and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, women's involvement in cultural activities was further stimulated by the growing interest in reading. The extent to which reading material was actually available to provincial gentlewomen is a contested question. On the one hand, Karamzin, in his essay 'O knizhnoi trgovle i liubvi k chteniiu v Rossii' (On the Book Trade and the Love of Reading in Russia, 1802), painted a lively picture of the thirst for reading which seized the nobility in the Sentimentalist era, a development which Novikov's contributions to the emergence of the Russian book trade in the 1780s had helped to stimulate.<sup>6</sup> The interest in reading was reflected in literary works whose protagonists are frequently depicted going for a walk carrying a book in their hand.<sup>7</sup> Educational institutions, bookshops, publishing houses and public libraries began to appear in provincial towns, although it would take until the 1830s before they became considerable in number.<sup>8</sup> By the 1820s, reading had gained respect among the aristocracy, both in major cities and in the provinces. One of the first professional women writers of the Empire, Liubov' Krichevskaja (1800–?), lived in Kharkov, where she greatly benefitted from her city's vibrant cultural life.<sup>9</sup> Books were available even in provincial towns which provided less intellectual stimulation, as Alexandra Kobiakova (1823–1892) reports in her autobiography.<sup>10</sup> That was the time when some noblewomen began to collect books for their own private

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<sup>6</sup> Natal'ia Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma. Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniiia*. Nauka: St Petersburg 1994, p. 157.

It has to be noted that *belles-lettres* accounted only for 20 to 30 percent of publications, as Gary Marker documents, see

Gary Marker: *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia. 1700–1800*. Princeton University Press: Princeton 1985, p. 230.

<sup>7</sup> Olga Glagoleva: 'Imaginary World. Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750–1825)'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 129–146 (p. 131);

Natal'ia Kochetkova: 'Geroi russkogo sentimentalizma. Chtenie v zhizni "chuvstvitel'nogo" geroia'. In: *Russkaia literatura XVIII—nachala XIX veka v obshchestvenno-kul'turnom kontekste*. Nauka: Leningrad 1983, pp. 121–142 (p. 140),

see also Catherine Evtuhov: *Portrait of a Russian Province. Economy, Society, and Civilisation in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh 2011;

Iurii D. Levin: *The Perception of English Literature in Russia. Investigations and Materials*. Philips, Catherine (transl.). Astra: Nottingham 1994, pp. 175–178.

<sup>8</sup> Glagoleva 2000, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Liubov Krichevskaja: *No Good without Reward. Selected Writings. A Bilingual Edition*. Baer, Brian James (ed.). Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies: Toronto 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Toby W. Clyman / Judith Vowles: *Russia Through Women's Eyes*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1996, pp. 60–74.

libraries. Educated women in the provinces had to find ways of obtaining new reading material, e. g. by buying books on their trips to major cities.

On the other hand, intellectual circles whose members would discuss ideas relating to reading tended to be concentrated in the major cities. Women living in remote areas encountered considerable obstacles if they wanted to overcome their status as social and intellectual outsiders. One scholar notes that in a provincial town like Kharkov, for instance, books could only be bought during fairs, and were mostly for children or about household matters — a view in stark contrast with Krichevskaja's depiction of the town's lively cultural life mentioned earlier.<sup>11</sup> It is also noteworthy that the poet Anna Bunina moved to St Petersburg from the countryside in search of the wide range of educational opportunities the big city provided.<sup>12</sup> Katherine Pickering Antonova's study of a provincial gentry family in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century suggests that the provincial gentry did a lot of reading and that a great deal of reading material was available, and also usually exchanged among friends and relatives, but that there was a desire for an even larger amount and greater variety of reading material.<sup>13</sup>

In the Enlightenment, reading was the privilege of a few cultured noblemen educated in a humanist vein and required a serious study of the work in question, often presupposing familiarity with the classical style and topoi. In Sentimentalist discourse, however, reading began to be regarded as a pastime; no one wishing to pass their time in the company of a book was required to be able to identify traditional literary genres. Light fiction, accessible to any literate person with a 'sensitive heart', became Sentimentalism's predominant literary genre, and was particularly popular among young women deprived of a classical education. Books became accessible to a new readership, including merchants, soldiers, vendors, and even serfs.<sup>14</sup>

Classicism's one-dimensional and elitist relationship between author and publisher was replaced in the Sentimentalist era by more domestic circles which saw

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<sup>11</sup> Brodskii, p. 553.

<sup>12</sup> Rosslyn 1997, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> Katherine Pickering Antonova: *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013, pp. 95–118.

On the availability of reading material in the provinces, see also Priscilla Roosevelt: *Life on the Russian Country Estate. A Social and Cultural History*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1995, pp. 206–209.

<sup>14</sup> Inna Gorbatov: *Formation du concept de Sentimentalisme dans la littérature russe. L'Influence de J.J. Rousseau sur l'œuvre de N.M. Karamzin*. Peter Lang Verlag: Paris 1991, pp. 46.

friends gathered informally to read literary works — their own or other writers' — to each other, and to exchange materials and information on new publications. Journals announcing new books which could be ordered by subscription were another source of news about literary works. Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia also saw the creation of journals for women, such as *Damskii zhurnal* (The Ladies' Magazine, 1806–1816), *Aglaia* (Aglaia, 1808–1812), *Kabinet Aspazii* (Aspasia's Cabinet, 1815), *Modnyi vestnik* (The Fashion Messenger, 1816), or *Vseobshchii modnyi zhurnal* (General Fashion Messenger, 1817). As the number of journals increased, so did the importance attributed to reading; newspaper reading became part of the curriculum of boarding schools for girls.<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubting the egalitarian aspect of the wider availability of reading materials, rendering reading accessible to different kinds of social groups, including women. However, the development also affected the literary quality of the works, many of which were trite and trivial. Journals devoted almost as much attention to fashion as to literature, and literally became a part of a lady's accessories. They often had very stylish covers and were put on display next to other fashionable fripperies. As Gitta Hammarberg observes, 'journals were placed in the context of a lady's *toilette* among cosmetics and combs, as if stressing that booklets beautify her as much as cosmetics'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the connotation of the 'trivialisation' of literature with the female perpetuated the exclusion of women from academic knowledge.

### Salons as centres of literary activity

Literary works were frequently discussed in the context of salons. Their emergence offered women the opportunity to educate themselves and become involved in cultural matters. Early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian salons were usually hosted by women. However, as venues situated in Habermas' semi-public world of the authentic public sphere, where men interacted with women, they challenged the paradigm of a female

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<sup>15</sup> Pushkareva 2003, pp. 118–120;

Grigorii Tishkin: 'Zhenskii vopros i pisatel'skii trud na rubezhe XVIII—XIX vekov'. In: Fainshtein, Mikhail (ed.): *Russkie pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII—pervoi treti XX vv.* Göpfert:

Wilhelmshorst 1995, pp. 29–42 (p. 37);

Glagoleva 2003, p. 131;

Hammarberg 2001, pp. 219–221.

<sup>16</sup> Hammarberg 2001, pp. 221–223.

private sphere and a male public reserve. In the context of 20<sup>th</sup>-century salon culture, Beth Holmgren formulates the paradox as follows:

Whereas a salon is almost always situated in a private home, it projects in various ways a liminal space between private and public — by including public characters, mixing different social groups, eliciting small-scale public dialogue.<sup>17</sup>

Salon hostesses had to find a balance between offering light-hearted entertainment and creating an environment of inspiration — and criticism — for aspiring poets. Being a salon hostess, then, enabled a woman to occupy an important social position and to receive public recognition for her talents, not least as a co-architect of the authentic public sphere.

In St Petersburg, a prestigious literary society, Alexander Shishkov's (1754–1841) *Beseda Liubitelei Russkogo Slova* (Gathering of Lovers of the Russian Word) included three women authors: Bunina, Volkova, and Ekaterina Urusova (1747–after 1816).

Literary salons and circles emerged not only in the big cities, but also in some provincial centres. Cultured societies organised by women met regularly in Odessa or Kharkov, or in Kazan, as in the case of Alexandra Fuks (c.1805–1853). Provincial towns such as Kaluga, Kostroma, Smolensk, and Tula also had centres of intellectual life actively involving women. It has to be noted, however, that the greatest numbers of salons were to be found in major cities, whereas considerably fewer salons existed in the provinces.<sup>18</sup>

In the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, few cultured circles were open to provincial women with aspirations to become a writer. According to Irina Savkina's study on 1830s to 1840s prose writers including Elena Gan (1814–1842), Alexandra Zrazhevskaja (1805–1867), and Sofiia Zakrevskaja (c.1796–c.1865), such women were double outsiders, both as a women writers and as a provincial residents, *provintsialki*,

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<sup>17</sup> Beth Holmgren: 'Stepping Out / Going Under: Women in Russia's Twentieth-Century Salons'. In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia — Women — Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 225–246 (p. 226).

<sup>18</sup> Glagoleva 2000, p. 12.

In the course of the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, conversations about literary topics occurred not only in salons, but also increasingly in more formal literary societies, see Alessandra Tosi: *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801–1825)*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 2006, p. 65.



provincial women. However, as my chapter on Bolotnikova will suggest, women poets living in the country to whom the term *provintsialka* might be applied existed even before the period covered by Savkina. In this context, some of the women authors which feature in Savkina's study were at least partly educated in St Petersburg prior to moving to the provinces at a later point in their lives. Gan, in contrast, spent her entire life in the country, where she received an outstanding education. Even though these women did not frequent salons or literary circles, they did produce a considerable number of literary works, often as a source of income. Collaboration in journals was an important means of achieving publication: Zakrevskaia, to name just one, sent her literary productions to city friends who assisted her in publishing her works in journals.<sup>19</sup>

An 18<sup>th</sup>-century precursor of the Russian salon seems to have existed in the house of Elizaveta Kheraskova, who organised gatherings of famous men — and a few women — of letters.<sup>20</sup> Among early-19<sup>th</sup>-century salon hostesses, we find Alexandra Khvostova (1767–1853), who held literary evenings in her St Petersburg apartment. Two decades later, in 1821, Sofiia Ponomareva set up literary evenings, again in St Petersburg, which attracted the intellectual elite of the day. Emulating the salons of the French *précieuses*, Ponomareva celebrated her central role of salon hostess, seated on a sofa, surrounded by admirers while orchestrating the intellectual exchange. Still in St Petersburg, Alexandra Voeikova (1795–1829) seems to have held a similar type of salon, while Avodoti'a Kireevskaia-Elagina (1789–1877) did so in 1820s Moscow. Other noteworthy salon hostesses were Zinaida Volkonskaia, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mikhail Fainshtein: *Pisatel'nitsy pushkinskoi pory. Istoriko-literaturnye ocherki*. Nauka: Leningrad 1989, p. 138;

Irina Savkina: *Provintsialki russkoi literatury. Zhenskaia proza 30—40 godov XIX veka*. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1998, pp. 56–60.

On mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian women writers from the provinces, see also Hilde Hoogenboom: 'The Importance of Being Provincial. Nineteenth-Century Russian Women Writers and the Countryside'. In: Dowler, Lorraine / Carubia, Josephine / Szczygiel, Bonj (eds): *GenderScapes. Renegotiating, Reinterpreting and Reconfiguring the Moral Landscape*. Routledge: New York 2005, pp. 240–253.

<sup>20</sup> See Ewington, p. 41, and Sandra Shaw Bennett: "'Parnassian Sisters" of Derzhavin's Acquaintance. Some Observations on Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: Salvo, Maria Di and Hughes, Lindsey (eds): *A Window on Russia. Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*. Gargnano, 1994. La Fenice: Rome 1996, pp. 249–256 (p. 252).

<sup>21</sup> Judith Vowles: 'The Inexperienced Muse. Russian Women and Poetry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In: Barker, Adele / Gheith, Jehanne (eds): *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2002, pp. 62–84 (p. 64);

Lina Bernstein: 'Women on the Verge of a New Language. Russian Salon Hostesses in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In: *Russia — Women — Culture*, 1996, pp. 209–224 (p. 209, p. 211);

With its emphasis on the world of feelings and women's participation in salons, this cultural institution revised male gender roles. The Sentimentalist man claimed to empathise with women and to cherish their feminine nature to such an extent that he adapted his own behaviour, 'feminising' himself. Compassion, friendship, tears and a tender heart became fixtures in the Sentimentalist man's repertoire. As Hammarberg found elsewhere, a more 'feminine' type of man became a model for male behaviour.<sup>22</sup> Her study argues that, at the turn of the century, the character of the dandy began to make an appearance in the arena of society life. The male counterpart to the coquette imitated her manners, adopting her interest in looks and clothing, her fascination with French language and culture, her 'feminine' diction and her often exaggeratedly delicate disposition. Some men occupied themselves with activities traditionally considered to belong to the sphere of women, such as embroidery. From the 1790s to the 1810s, Sentimentalism's elevated regard for femininity meant that, in some quarters, it became fashionable for the man to be effeminate.

### **Egalitarian principles in Sentimentalist literature**

Sentimentalist literary works addressed many social issues, among them egalitarian principles and a belief in the unconditional equal value of all human beings. The scholar Grigorii Gukovskii considered Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802) to be the main representative of the democratic and revolutionary trend in Russian Sentimentalism but considered Karamzin, on the other hand, to uphold reactionary views.<sup>23</sup> The impression is partly confirmed when we consider Karamzin's intention to

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Deborah Heller: 'Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere'. In: *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, 1998, pp. 59–82 (p. 60);

Mary Zirin: 'Khvostova, Aleksandra Petrovna'. In: Ledkovsky, Marina et al. (eds): *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*. Greenwood Press: London 1994, pp. 291–292 (p. 291);

Brodskii: p. 96;

Andrew 2001, p. 58;

Glagoleva 2000, pp. 48–49, 53;

Vatsuro, V.: *SDP: Iz istorii literaturnogo byta Pushkinskoi pory*. Kniga: Moscow 1989.

In his study on 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literature, Joachim Klein prefers the term 'literary circle' to 'salon' as he does not think Russia knew a proper salon culture during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see Ioachim Klein: *Russkaia literature XVIII veka*, Indrik: Moscow 2010, p. 289. There may, however, have existed a salon culture in Russia during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>22</sup> Hammarberg 1994, pp. 115–120.

Kuxhausen has found that some contemporary educational theorists disliked effeminate men inspired by French literature, culture, and fashion, promoting instead an ideal of masculinity associated with the Russian nation unspoilt by foreign, i.e. French, influences, see

Kuxhausen, pp. 111–114.

<sup>23</sup> Pavel Orlov: *Russkii sentimentalism*. Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta: Moscow 1977, pp. 5–6.

conserve the patriarchal order in the private sphere of the family, opting for the extension of patriarchal rights to society as a whole. In his *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (Letters of a Russian Traveller), he relates the protagonist's suggestion that the inhabitants of a Swiss village should proceed with a young criminal in the same way as a father would if he had to punish his own child: public life becomes a 'semiprivate patriarchal sphere'.<sup>24</sup> Other writings by Karamzin reflect similar attitudes, for example the novel *Frol Silin*, which romanticises a time when landowners treated their subordinates as a father would his children. In contrast to Karamzin, Radishchev suggested that human relationships, whether in family or friendship, should be based on natural feelings of respect, did not, however, extend this kind of equality to women. Nor, as Joe Andrew observes, does he discuss women's rights anywhere in his works.<sup>25</sup>

To a great extent, the democratic potential of Sentimentalism is due to its celebration of equality on an emotional basis. This is expressed most clearly in Karamzin's *Poor Liza*, a novella in which the female protagonist, a peasant girl, is emotionally equal to an aristocrat and capable of experiencing the same kind of emotions. Owing to the universal human capacity to experience emotions, the Sentimentalist notion of compassion presupposed the unconditional and equal value of all human beings. This is why it allowed authors to include social outsiders such as peasants and women in their work. Many Russian authors who wrote literature which fitted into the paradigm of Classicism at the same time composed works which belonged to lower literary genres, in which peasants and serfs were protagonists, as shown in Iurii Veselovskii's study. Alexander Sumarokov, for example, who addressed sublime and heroic topics in his historical drama *Dmitrii Samozvanets* (Dmitrii the Impostor), also wrote fables which reproduced the language and customs of simple peasants. Iakov Kniazhnin (1742–1791), the author of the historical drama, *Vadim Novgorodskii* (Vadim of Novgorod), about the lost republican freedom of ancient Russia, also composed a simple poem in verse form recounting a conversation between two peasants.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Andreas Schönle: 'The Scare of the Self', *Slavic Review* 57, 1998, pp. 723–746 (pp. 736–737).

<sup>25</sup> Gorbatov, p. 150;

Joe Andrew: 'Radical Sentimentalism or Sentimental Radicalism? A Feminist Approach to Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature'. In: Kelly, Catriona et al. (eds): *Discontinuous Discourses in Modern Russian Literature*. Macmillan: London 1989, pp. 136–156 (p. 145).

<sup>26</sup> Iurii Veselovskii: *Literaturnye ocherki*. Tipografiia Vasil'eva: Moscow 1900, pp. 433–468.

The topic of serfdom in particular began to appear in literary works, especially in the writings by noblemen who had withdrawn to their estates where they came into closer contact with the reality of serfdom. A literary genre predestined to address the subject of serfdom was the pastoral. Idealising nature and expressing scepticism about civilisation, it was the quintessential Sentimentalist poetic genre. As Terry Gifford observes, 'pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may [...] either simply *escape* from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, "our manners", or *explore* them.' Two forces were in opposition to each other, the idealisation of nature as a Garden of Eden versus the presence of hard-working serfs disrupting the idyll. Many aristocrats returning to their estates ignored the social injustice of serfdom, producing poems featuring shepherds frolicking blissfully in an idyllic imaginary scenery glowing in endless spring. Others, however, employed their literary skills to criticise social inequality and unfairness. The democratic potential of Sentimentalist ethics rests upon their tendency to face and explore reality rather than produce idealised accounts.

Traditional pastorals featured two main characters, the shepherd and the agricultural labourer. The shepherd symbolises leisure; while tending his flocks he has time to sing songs and exchange gentle words with his beloved shepherdess. The labourer, on the other hand, is busy working all day long, with only short moments of rest. He is virtuous and contented with the harmonious life on the estate and in his family fold, happy despite all the hard work because it prevents him from leading the life of idleness and vice to which the city-dweller is prone. The labourer's work fulfils and represents the idea of God's Creation; he is the gardener in a terrestrial Eden. The character of the contented agricultural labourer therefore frequently appears in moralist writings such as Marmontel's, which, as Wendy Rosslyn has shown, were widely translated into Russian in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

The character of the shepherd is usually portrayed against the background of a *locus amoenus*, an idyllic landscape with babbling brooks and sheep grazing in perpetual spring. This is how he appears in works by Sentimentalist women writers including Bunina. Her poem 'Vesna' (Spring), for example, depicts a *locus amoenus* in

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<sup>27</sup> Wendy Rosslyn: *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness. Translations by Russian Women. 1763–1825*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2000, pp. 75–76.

which shepherdesses lead a carefree life; they are contented with their idyllic environment and the frugal nourishment provided by nature:

В жерло зернистаго граната  
 Бьет с шумом чистая вода;  
 На злаках горного поката  
 Пасутся тучные стада.  
 В различных купах под кустами,  
 Со светлыми, как день очами,  
 Сидят безпечно пастушки.  
 Их снедь: млеко с суровым хлебом;  
 Но кто счастливей их под небом!  
 Забота их: свирель, — рожки.<sup>28</sup>

*Into an open granite mouth  
 Fresh water crashes and resounds;  
 In the fields on rolling hills,  
 Herds of fattening cattle graze.  
 In little groups beneath the trees,  
 Their eyes as bright as any day,  
 The shepherds sit, all quite carefree.  
 Their fare is milk with simple bread;  
 But who is happier than they!  
 Their only care's the pipe, — the little horns.<sup>29</sup>*

Portrayals of the agricultural labourer had a tendency to be less idealised than those of the shepherd. Although depictions of his life were far from realistic, descriptions of his work would often list his various tasks, which is why the character lends itself to the criticism of serfdom.<sup>30</sup> As a result of Sentimentalism's democratic tendency, the agricultural labourer acquired more serf-like traits, losing many of the traditional,

<sup>28</sup> Anna Bunina: *Neopytnaia muza Anna Buninoi. Chast' vtoraiia*. Morskaia tipografiia: St Petersburg 1812. 'Vesna', pp. 62–67 (p. 63).

<sup>29</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>30</sup> Klaus Garber: *Der locus amoenus und der locus terribilis. Bild und Funktion der Natur in der deutschen Schäfer- und Landlebendichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Böhlau: Köln 1974, pp. 82–83.

idealising features. He was given a voice to deplore the injustice of being forced to live a much worse life than that of his master and mistress, an aspect I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five.

The character of the serf appears in the genre of the comic opera, where, as it seems, he often became a mouthpiece for the author's criticism of the institution of serfdom. Veselovskii's exploration of representations of the countryside in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian poetry suggests this view.<sup>31</sup> In Iakov Kniazhnin's *Neshchast'e ot karety* (Misfortune from a Coach), for instance, a serf complains about his and his fellow serfs' miserable lives: their masters tell them what to drink and eat, and even decide who they may marry; the serf adds that their masters make fun of the serfs' misfortunes, yet would die from hunger without their hard work. In the comic opera, *Aniuta*, by Mikhail Popov (1742–c.1790), one of the protagonists criticises the aristocrats who do nothing but eat, drink, go for walks and sleep while the peasants slave away and even have to pay their masters. Serfs appear similarly in fables by Ivan Khemnitser (1745–1784). In *Prazdnik derevenskii* (The Village Feast), for example, they complain that they must plough, reap or sow all year long and can never enjoy a moment of leisure. Drawing on Iurii Lotman's theories, Priscilla R. Roosevelt has suggested that the dramatic arts of late-18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia had a tendency to invade everyday life, of which the serf in comic opera may be considered a manifestation. The ruling class did not, however, interpret the presence of the serf in comic opera as a call to abolish serfdom, but rather, as Simon Karlinsky argues in his study on Russian drama, to expose the abuses of the institution without changing the system as such.<sup>32</sup>

To a certain extent, then, the appearance of the literary character of the serf indicates that the ruling classes were aware of social inequalities. This philanthropic motivation notwithstanding, authors often instrumentalised the serf to express their views on topics other than serfdom. The serf thus became just another dramatic character, often to create a comic effect, as an example from a satirical poem by Denis Fonvizin (1744/45–1792) demonstrates. His 'Poslanie k slugam moim Shumilovu, Van'ke i Petrushke' (Epistle to my Servants Shumilov, Van'ka, and Petrushka) dates

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<sup>31</sup> Veselovskii, pp. 433–468.

<sup>32</sup> Priscilla R. Roosevelt: 'Emerald Thrones and Living Statues. Theater and Theatricality on the Russian Estate'. *The Russian Review. An American Quarterly Devoted to Russia Past and Present* 50, 1991, pp. 1–23;  
Simon Karlinsky: *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*. University of California Press: Berkeley L.A. 1985, pp. 116–149.

from 1760, when Sentimentalist ethics were beginning to emerge. The narrator is a nobleman who muses about the meaning of life and of the world. Unable to find the answers, he asks three of his serfs in turn. The first one replies that he does not know the meaning of life, but that he knows he will always have to be a servant. The second serf adds that he lacks the education to know the answer to such a question. He does, however, tell his master how the world works in his opinion: from serf to tsar, everyone wants to fill their pockets, which they can only do by deceit. The third serf agrees, suggesting that the only life worth living is a selfish one.<sup>33</sup> Fonvizin's use of the serf is less to express criticism of serfdom than of depraved human morals. The character of the serf lends himself to this literary task because he is the silent observer of a world in which he is not supposed to participate. The serf enhances the credibility of the author's message: if even a simple serf can comprehend the corrupted state of human relations, corrupted it must be. The instrumentalisation of the character of the serf impedes a serious examination of his social position. He becomes a topos, a stereotype against which to uphold other, more important views.

Moreover, in addition to his function of enhancing the authenticity of the author's opinions, the juxtaposition of the narrator's quiet way of life with the serf's labours serves the literary purpose of producing a comic effect. In Nikolai L'vov's (1751–1803) comic opera, *Silf, ili mechta molodoi zhenshchiny* (Sylph, or a Young Woman's Dream), the character of the serf also creates an entertaining incident. Andrei, a hard-working servant, complains about his lazy master and protests his lot in an aria, the usual genre in which the subject of serfdom occurs in comic opera:

Право, я не ради свету!  
 Ну да что, житья мне нету  
 Уж от ваших прихотей!  
 Будь и кучер и лакей,  
 Конюх, дворник, казначей.  
 Всё исправь, везде поспей,  
 Да ведь я один Андрей!  
 Я и дворник, и садовник,

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<sup>33</sup> Denis Fonvizin: 'Poslanie k slugam moim Shumilovu, Van'ke i Petrushke'. In: N. Gaidenkov (ed.): *Russkie poety XIX veka. Khrestomatiia*. Gosudarstvennoe Uchebno-Pedagogicheskoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Prosveshcheniia RSFSR: Moscow 1958, pp. 25–27.

Я и кучер, и лакей,  
 Конюх, дворник, казначей.  
 Всё исправь, везде поспей,  
 Да ведь я один Андрей!<sup>34</sup>

*It's true, I say this not for the world!  
 What can I say, I have no shelter  
 From your whims and fancies!  
 If only there were a driver, lackey,  
 Groom and yardman, treasurer.  
 Get it done, be everywhere,  
 But I'm only one Andrei!  
 I'm a yardman, and a gardener,  
 I'm a driver, and a lackey,  
 A groom, a yardman, and a bursar.  
 Get it done, be everywhere,  
 But I'm only one Andrei!*<sup>35</sup>

According to the stage directions for this scene, the serf sweeping the garden exits to the side. His purpose here is to create an amusing interlude between more important scenes which drive the plot. Although his aria voices criticism of the serfdom's social inequality, its predominant effect is tragicomical. As may befit the genre of comic opera, the character of the serf is endowed with clown-like features rather than those of a critic of social power relations.

Once the character of the serf becomes commonplace in comic opera, the content of his speech begins to lose significance. The serf evolves into an interchangeable puppet whose sole purpose is to entertain the audience, a function which trivialises him and his complaint about his destiny. If spectators sympathise at all with the serf, they do so in a patronising manner rather than with an aim to bring about social change. The trivialised image of the serf turns out to be a way of 'killing

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<sup>34</sup> Nikolai L'vov: *Izbrannye sochineniia*. Lappo-Danilevskii, K. (ed.). Akropolis: St Petersburg 1994, pp. 219–256 (pp. 232–233).

My thanks to Elena Kukushkina from the *Pushkinskii Dom* in St Petersburg for this reference.

<sup>35</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



the serf into art'. The expression 'to kill women into art' has been used in feminist studies to describe a choice of unrealistic and stereotypical representations of women in art, which 'kill' or obliterate women because they prevent debates on the complexities women face in real life.<sup>36</sup> Once the serf makes his appearance in literature — in the guise of a comic character — the privileged classes may feel that they have accomplished their duty and can avoid further examination of the implications of his presence for their own situation. It should also be noted that most actors in theatrical performances held on country estates were serfs who were completely at the estate owner's mercy.<sup>37</sup>

The issue of woman's social rights and societal position was another topic addressed in various Sentimentalist literary works. Karamzin expressed his concern about the oppression of women in one part of his 'Poslanie k zhenshchinam' (Epistle to Women, 1795), even though he seems to think the problem only exists in countries other than Russia. He uses the liberation of women as an excuse for the Russian war against the Ottoman Empire, a country he regards as uncivilised and unenlightened and one in which women are oppressed:

[...] О Азия, раба  
Насильств, предрассуждений!  
Когда всемогущая судьба  
В тебе рассеет мрак несчастных заблуждений

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<sup>36</sup> Heyder / Rosenholm, p. 52. The expression was inspired by Virginia Woolf's suggestion that women should 'kill the angel in the house'. In: Virginia Woolf: 'Professions for Women'. In: *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. Harcourt: New York 1942, pp. 236–238.

<sup>37</sup> Laurence Senelick: 'The Erotic Bondage of Serf Theatre'. *The Russian Review. An American Quarterly Devoted to Russia Past and Present* 50, 1991, pp. 24–34;  
Catherine Schuler: 'The Gender of Russian Serf Theatre and Performance'. In: Gale, Maggie B. / Gardner, Viv (eds): *Women, Theatre and Performance. New Histories, New Historiographies*. Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York 2000, pp. 216–235;  
Richard Stites: 'Female Serfs in the Performing World'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*, pp. 24–38.  
On Russian women as actresses, see also  
Wendy Rosslyn: 'Female Employees in the Russian Imperial Theatres. 1785–1825'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 257–277;  
Wendy Rosslyn: 'Petersburg Actresses on and off Stage. 1775–1825'. In: Cross, Anthony (ed.): *St Petersburg. 1703–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2003, pp. 119–147;  
Wendy Rosslyn: 'The Prehistory of Russian Actresses. Women on Stage in Russia (1704–1757)'. In: Bartlett, Roger / Lehmann-Carli, Gabriela (eds): *Eighteenth-Century Russia. Society, Culture, Economy. Papers from the VII International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, Wittenberg 2004*. LIT: Münster: 2007, pp. 69–81.

И нежный пол от уз освободит?  
 Когда познаешь ты приятность вольной страсти?  
 Когда в тебе любовь сердца соединит,  
 Не тяжкая рука жестокой, лютой власти?

Когда не гнусный страж, не крепость мрачных стен,  
 Но верность красоте хранительницей будет?  
 Когда в любви тиран-мужчина позабудет,  
 Что больше женщины он силой наделен?<sup>38</sup>

*[...] Oh, Asia, slave  
 Of violence, prejudices!  
 When will almighty fate  
 Disperse in you the darkness of unhappy misconceptions  
 And set free the tender sex from its yoke?  
 When will you recognise the pleasure of free passion?  
 When will love unite hearts in you,  
 And not the heavy hand of cruel and frenzied power?*

*When will not the foul watchman, not the fortress of gloomy walls,  
 But faithfulness to beauty be my keeper?  
 When, in love, will the tyrannical man forget  
 That he has been given more power than a woman?<sup>39</sup>*

Karamzin here raises the 'woman question', criticising societies which deny women their freedom, tolerating physical violence and coercion into arranged marriages, which became formally illegal in Russia in 1722. It is difficult to say to what extent Karamzin here also hints at the situation of women in Russia, who are not allowed to divorce even a severely abusive husband. In advocating a social system which allows women to choose their spouses according to their inclinations, Karamzin certainly

<sup>38</sup> Nikolai Karamzin: 'Poslanie k zhenshchinam'. In: Kuchеров, A. (ed.): *N. Karamzin and I. Dmitriev. Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia*. Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1953, pp. 169–170; Maarten Fraanje: 'La Sensibilité au pays du froid. Les lumières et le sentimentalisme russe'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 659–668 (p. 662).

<sup>39</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

echoes Sentimentalist views; he would also grant women the right to seek sexual fulfilment. The stanza quoted above contains terms which evoke the republican ideals that began to be discussed at the time — ‘uzy’, ‘osvobodit’’, ‘vol’nyi’, ‘vlast’’, and ‘tiran’ (fetters, to liberate, free, power, tyrant) — eventually becoming key words in Decembrist communications about their revolutionary project.

A further sign that the early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an emerging discussion of gender roles is the appearance of powerful female characters in the works of some male writers. Konstantin Ryleev’s writings feature heroic women who assume their civil responsibilities just as men do. Karamzin, who cherished the image of the naive girl in his sentimental works, gives an influential role in the public sphere to a courageous, authoritative woman in his novel *Marfa Posadnitsa* (Martha the Mayoress, 1803). Not everyone accepted this image of women. In fact, one of his contemporaries accused Karamzin of Jacobinism for having ‘... made a drunken and stupid hag deliver speeches in favour of the liberties of the Novgorodians and orate like Demosthenes’.<sup>40</sup>

Sentimentalism’s elevated regard for women manifested itself in the fact that, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, men’s ideal of a woman began to feature qualities such as intelligence and education. Petr Makarov, for instance, was a Sentimentalist who argued that women should have access to education and knowledge, harshly criticising men who thought that this might reduce a woman’s physical attractiveness:

But what shall we think of these people who are firmly convinced that a woman cannot acquire knowledge without losing the attractiveness of her sex, and who, as a consequence, wish that an entire half of humanity (and the better one) does not educate itself?<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Tishkin, pp. 34–38;

Nikolai Karamzin: *Marfa-Posadnitsa, ili pokorenie Novgoroda*. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989; quotation from Richard Pipes: ‘Karamzin’s Conception of the Monarchy’. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin. Russian Man-of-Letters, Political Thinker, Historian. 1766–1826*. Mouton: The Hague 1975, pp. 105–126 (p. 108).

Natal’ia Pushkareva suggests that this work by Karamzin initiated further interest in female historical characters, see

Natal’ia Pushkareva: *Russkaia zhenshchina. Istoriia i sovremennost’*. Lodomir: Moscow 2002, pp. 11–12.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Mais que penser de ces gens qui sont effectivement persuadés que la femme ne pourra acquérir des connaissances qu’en perdant tous les attraits de son sexe, et qui, en conséquence, souhaitent que la moitié entière (et la meilleure) du genre humain ne s’instruise pas ?’. Quoted in: Jean Breuillard: ‘Positions féministes dans la vie littéraire russe. Fin du XVIIIe et début du XIXe siècle’. *L’Enseignement du russe* 22, 1976, pp. 4–24 (pp. 7–13). Translation by Emily Lygo.

Karamzin, too, supported the idea that a woman's attraction did not reside in looks alone: in addition to virtues such as goodness and kindness, she should also have an educated mind. This was one of the reasons why, in the 1960s, scholars began to think of Karamzin as a progressive rather than a reactionary writer. French researcher Jean Breuillard, for instance, identifies democratic tendencies in Karamzin's symbolic elevation of women and in Sentimentalist calls to improve women's educational opportunities.

The way in which women became the focus of attention of male writers in Sentimentalist culture is further illustrated elsewhere in Karamzin's programmatic 'Epistle to Women'. Its opening lines, for instance, address women as follows:

О вы, которых мне любезна благосклонность

Любезнее всего! которым с юных лет

Я в жертву приносил, чего дороже нет:

*O you, whose kind favour to me is*

*Kinder than all others! To whom from my youngest years*

*I've sacrificed the thing of greatest value.*<sup>42</sup>

Here Karamzin rehabilitates the notion of femininity after the low standing it had been accorded in Enlightenment aesthetics. Mikhail Lomonosov's (1711–1765) 'Razgovor s Anakreontom' (Conversation with Anakreon), written in the 1760s, for example, suggests that any writer aware of his civic duties should banish love lyrics from his pen. The view supported by Lomonosov's poem is that a mature man should be proud of his achievements as a conscientious citizen and politician, and should not idle his time away in the company of women. In contrast, the narrator of Karamzin's epistle claims to be striving to adopt the feminine values he has found in women's circles, and decides to live a domestic life in their virtuous and kind-hearted company, in preference to the glory and status a warrior's life would afford him.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>43</sup> Karamzin 1953, p. 161;

Mikhail Lomonosov: 'Razgovor s Anakreontom'. In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vavilov, S. (ed.). Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR: Leningrad 1959, pp. 761–767 (pp. 763–764).

### **The functionalisation of women in Sentimentalist literary culture**

One of the disadvantages of this kind of conception was that it objectified and functionalised women. Just as in courtly love culture, woman in male Sentimentalist thinking became a remote object of the man's desire, a 'universal ideal emptied of all substance'.<sup>44</sup> In Karamzin's perception, as expressed in his 'Epistle to Women', women were thought to have a civilising effect on men, which is why women's task was to help men to refine themselves. His epistle depicts how the most ferocious warrior spares the lives of his enemies if his action can gain the favour of the woman of his heart. The narrator further describes how in his mature years the gentle glance of a woman is a reward for the atrocities which he has had to suffer from men. He also relates how much he admires the nuns' charitable work. Although this observation was meant to encourage men to imitate this laudable example it eventually functionalised women since it did not recognise them as beings with their own rights and claims. In the kind of thinking exposed in Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women', women are idealised either as an authority which offers symbolic rewards for men's military actions, or as exemplars of virtue and refinement from which men were supposed to learn.

The woman reader in particular became a symbol and an abstract point of reference for the Sentimentalist male author because it helped him to construct his conception of literary creation. The main concern of a Sentimentalist writer was that his works should be appealing to female readers. He adapted his style, topics, and linguistic level to what he imagined to be the liking of the 'fair sex'. The desire of pleasing a female readership accompanied and stimulated his writing process. By assigning special importance to the speech of women and to their domain of activity the Sentimentalist man wanted to challenge the rigid Classicist norms of genres. Women were considered to be ideal judges of the quality of a literary work because they were to a great extent unaware of the traditional requirements of genre. Just as Rousseau found the personification of innate goodness in his untutored wife Thérèse, who had a feeling for beauty despite her lack of education, Karamzin regarded women as ideal arbiters of taste precisely because they were considered to be alienated from culture. It is largely due to this feature that many scholars revised the image of Karamzin as a conservative writer and regarded the importance which he attributed to

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<sup>44</sup> Slavoj Žižek: 'Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing'. In: Wright, Elizabeth / Wright, Edmond (eds): *The Žižek Reader*. Blackwell: Oxford 1999, pp. 148–173 (p. 148).

women as readers and arbiters of taste as an extension of democratic ideals to women.<sup>45</sup>

In Hammarberg's view, the importance assigned to the female reader by Sentimentalism is a considerable departure from 'the traditional view of woman as passive and man as active'. It is true that, given their symbolic influence on men, women played quite an important part in the creative process, and that male authors feeling the need to adapt their writing to women's taste adopted more passive features. Nevertheless, Karamzin's new role for women in the process of literary creation defined most of them as readers rather than authors. The Sentimentalist idealisation of women as readers and arbiters of taste differed only marginally from their traditional role as muses who arouse men's poetic feelings, leaving the basic gender paradigm intact. Even though the woman reader became the axis around which Sentimentalist literary production revolved, women were still supposed to manage and monitor rather than create and initiate cultural activities. Carolin Heyder and Arja Rosenholm argue that in the perception of Sentimentalist men, 'woman is not a producer of a sign, but functions as a sign'.<sup>46</sup>

Women were further instrumentalised by the fact that Sentimentalism's symbolic elevation of women served to a great extent as a means for the man to explore his emotional capacities. In this respect, the Sentimentalist man emulated the tradition outlined by elegiac poems written from the male point of view, such as in Western European courtly love culture, where the rejection of the beloved woman gives rise to abundant male monologues. As Catherine Bates argues in relation to English Renaissance poetry, the scenario of courtly love culture turns the abject male lover of *amour courtois* into a master of rhetorical wit.<sup>47</sup> Sentimentalist man exchanges rhetorical mastery for the subtleties of the sensitive soul, yet the way in which he instrumentalises women by perceiving them as objects for his literary creativity has similarities to courtly love culture. Like the male poet in Western love poems, the narrator in Sentimentalist literature is mainly occupied with 'defining his own self', as Jan Montefiore observes.<sup>48</sup> For Montefiore, the male narrator's introspective

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<sup>45</sup> Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma*, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Hammarberg 1994, p. 109; Heyder / Rosenholm, p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Bates: 'Sidney and the Manic Wit of the Abject Male'. *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 41(1), 2001, pp. 1–24.

<sup>48</sup> Jan Montefiore: *Feminism and Poetry. Language, Experience, Identity in Women's Writing*. Pandora: London 1987, p. 98.

examination of his soul's emotional capacities turns out to be a narcissistic activity in which the 'other' helps to construct a reflection of the self.

To be 'sentimental' in the sense of 'sensitive' therefore meant different things to men and women. While it was a means of expressing man's intellectual freedom, it was considered to be a woman's inherent trait. Women were conceptualised as sensitive and passive beings who had to suffer without being able to overcome misery either through intellectual reflection or concrete actions. The gender distinction had a strong impact on the Sentimentalist conception of female death, which male writers tended to associate with concepts of virtue. Because women were considered to be the bearers of moral integrity, their lives could not go on once they had come into conflict with the requirement to epitomise innate goodness. When threatened, their virtue came even more to the fore. This idea could be found frequently in French literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the following examples show.

In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's (1773–1814) novel, *Paul et Virginie* (Paul and Virginia, 1788), the female protagonist chooses to drown with a sinking ship rather than be saved, since to be rescued, she would have to remove her heavy dress. She dies, hand placed on her heart and her gaze directed heavenwards — the very picture of a saint. François René de Chateaubriand's novel, *Atala* (1801), which was the precursor of his apology for Christianity, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (The Genius of Christianity, 1802), also reproduces the image of a young woman as a self-sacrificing pious virgin. Atala, a Christian girl raised in America, falls in love with a native. Just as they are about to consummate their love, however, Atala decides to poison herself in order to comply with her mother's wish that she should remain a virgin. Rousseau's Julie in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (Julie, or the New Heloise) dies after saving one of her children from drowning, death apparently being her only way to avoid the temptation of committing adultery.<sup>49</sup>

Russian literature reproduced these notions of female virtue and death, the most prominent example being Karamzin's novella, *Poor Liza*. As Natal'ia Kochetkova suggests, the story epitomises the Sentimentalist clash between the ideal and real worlds, a conflict in which woman is the epitome of the ideal, usually with tragic

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<sup>49</sup> Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Paul et Virginie*. Ehrard, Jean (ed.). Gallimard: Paris 2001; François René de Chateaubriand: *Atala*. Bernex, Raymond (ed.). Bordas: Paris 1985; Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *Julie, ou, la nouvelle Héloïse*. Launay, Michel (ed.). Flammarion: Paris 1967.

consequences. In this case, Liza commits suicide after being seduced and abandoned. Her death, however, is preceded by a state of saint-like sublime religious illumination. As Christo Manolakev observes, Liza's is the first of quite a number of women's suicides in Russian literature across the following two centuries, from Alexander Ostrovskii's Katerina in *Groza* (Thunderstorm) to Lev Tolstoi's Anna Karenina.<sup>50</sup> In Sentimentalist discourse, this type of female death was considered to be a kind of moral victory. In Karamzin's novella *Iulia* (Julia), the female protagonist owes her life to the fact that she has preserved her innate goodness without falling short of the requirements of female virtue. Julia is torn between feelings of passion and virtue, each of which is symbolised by a different man. At the end, Julia's sense of duty and virtue prevails and she finds happiness in a secluded life and fulfilment in her role as a selfless mother and woman. Female death is also glorified in Karamzin's verse epos, *Alina* (1790), in which the female protagonist must die — even though, a devoted wife, she has adhered to the strictest principles of virtue — when her husband Milon feels attracted to another girl. Unlike her husband, Alina has preserved her innate goodness and is ready to sacrifice her life so he may be happy. Her self-sacrificial intention rekindles Milon's feelings for her, but Alina has already poisoned herself and dies.<sup>51</sup>

### **Worship of nature as an earthly paradise**

The conception of woman as the epitome of goodness, an expectation she had to live up to, was related to the equation of woman with nature. In the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sensationalism had prepared the ground in the field of philosophy for an elevated regard for, not to say worship of, nature in both Western Europe and in Russia; the notion was becoming increasingly popular that the human senses were better suited than the human mind to acquire knowledge and truth. It had originally been expounded by philosophers including John Locke (1632–1704), Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780), and Charles Bonnet (1720–1793). As a result of Sensationalism's philosophical position, and in reaction against Enlightenment rationalism, early-19<sup>th</sup>-century literature increasingly began to regard nature as a source of spirituality, which is why nature was held in particularly high esteem.

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<sup>50</sup> Christo Manolakev: 'La Pauvre Lise de N.M. Karamzin et le suicide féminin dans la littérature russe du XIXe siècle'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 729–739.

<sup>51</sup> Kochetkova 1983, p. 135; Gorbатов, pp. 134, 155–156.



The trend was intensified by the religious current of Deism, which tried to prove God's existence without reference to the Bible, a cultural phenomenon endorsed by many Western European and Russian writers in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Deism, the individual finds confirmation for religious feelings in his or her own observations of nature. In his novel *Émile* (Emile), Rousseau outlines his concept of religion as 'inner feelings'. In the section entitled, 'Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard' (The Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar), he explains that people are capable of sensing divinity without a need for external rites. It is arguably this section which prompted Catherine the Great to prohibit the translation of Rousseau's *Emile*. Nevertheless, it became known among Russian readers, who were either able to read the French original, or because translations of the section included in other works managed to escape the censors.<sup>52</sup>

Pantheism was another influential religious and philosophical current at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Being present in Western European as well as Russian thought, it contributed considerably to the worship of nature common in Sentimentalism. A pantheistic approach to life requires the individual to discern God's existence in various manifestations of nature. The Bible contains pantheistic features in some of the psalms, which encourage the believer to celebrate God's greatness in every manifestation of Creation, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the oceans, the mountains, the woods, the meadows, every living thing, all of which carry a spark of paradise in them. Although pantheism and fascination with nature as an earthly paradise became particularly important at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they already existed in the Middle Ages, both in Russia and in the West. They persisted in the works of religious thinkers such as 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Blaise Pascal. In his *Les Pensées* (Thoughts), in which he attempted to write an apology for the Christian religion, he tries to convince atheists to adhere to the Christian faith by making them aware of the variety of universes of which nature consists. Similarly, the narrator in Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Conversations about the Variety of the Worlds), published in France in 1686 and translated into Russian by Anna Trubetskaia in 1802, resorted to astronomy and science to explain the

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<sup>52</sup> 'Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard'. In: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Émile, ou, de l'éducation*. L'Aminot, T. et al. (eds), pp. 320–390; Wladimir Berelowitch: 'Préface'. In: Mustel, Chantal (ed.): *Rousseau dans le monde russe et soviétique*. Musée Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Montmorency 1995, pp. 5–8 (p. 5).

heliocentric planetary system to a lady during their night walks.<sup>53</sup> The notion of a plurality of worlds is addressed frequently in early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Sentimentalist literature. It is reflected, for instance, in the title of a chapter, 'Mnozhestvo mirov' (The Multitude of the Worlds), in Karamzin's 1789 translation of Bonnet's *Contemplation de la Nature* (Contemplations of Nature, 1764–1765).<sup>54</sup>

As a result of the deistic and pantheistic currents of culture, many Western European writers of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced literary works which depicted nature as an earthly paradise or tried to demonstrate the existence of God in observations of nature. De Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul and Virginia*, mentioned previously, is a pastoral set on a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, a paradise of innocent love and virtue in stark contrast with the corrupted culture in which the author lives. De Saint-Pierre's *Études de la nature* (Studies on Nature), published between 1784 and 1788, were intended to demonstrate that nature was built according to God's plan. The author provides careful observations of the various spectacles of nature, suggesting that they instil religious feelings in the viewer. Chateaubriand's writings are part of a similar cultural trend. In his *Genius of Christianity*, published in 1802, he tries to convince his readers to accept the Christian faith by appealing to their feelings and personal experiences, and by providing descriptions of natural miracles. A further indicator of this cultural trend is the great popularity of a collection of poems by James Thomson (1700–1748), which draw on the Bible and on Virgil's pastoral poems: a German translation of Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726–1730) provided the libretto for the oratorio *Die Jahreszeiten* (1799–1801) by Joseph Haydn (1732–1803), the Classical composer.<sup>55</sup>

During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russian culture was fascinated with the notion of Paradise. The strong prominence of Freemasonry provides an intriguing

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<sup>53</sup> Iurii Lotman: 'Russo i russkaia kul'tura XVIII vek—nachala XIX veka'. In: Zhan-Zhak Russo: *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie traktaty*. [n.ed.] Nauka: Moscow 1969, pp. 555–604 (p. 558); Blaise Pascal: *Les Pensées*. Kaplan, Francis (ed.). Cerf: Paris 1982, pp. 153–154; Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle: *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. Calame, Alexandre (ed.). Didier: Paris 1966;

Anna Trubetskaia (transl.): *Razgovor o mnozhestve mirov. Soch. Fontenelia*. [n.pub.]: Moscow 1802.

<sup>54</sup> Bonnet, Charles: *Contemplation de la nature*. Heuback: Lausanne 1770; F. Kanunova / O. Kafanova: 'Karamzin i Zhukovskii. Vospriiatie "Sozertsaniia prirody" Sh. Bonne'. In: Kochetkova, N. (ed.): [no title.] (XVIII vek 18), Nauka: St Petersburg 1993, pp. 187–202.

<sup>55</sup> Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Études de la nature*. Deterville: Paris 1804; François René de Chateaubriand: *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Firmin Didot Frères: Paris 1844; James Thomson: *The Seasons*. Sambrook, James (ed.). Clarendon: Oxford 1981. A similar fascination with the Book of Genesis had already manifested itself in Haydn's earlier oratorio *Die Schöpfung* (The Creation, 1796–1798).

example. Masonic thought was virtually obsessed with the idea of catching a glimpse of Paradise; Masonic lodges, often called 'Paradise restored', offered their members a sanctuary to experience 'Paradise within', the internal bliss enjoyed by Prelapsarian man. The Freemasons strove to recover the 'higher wisdom' with which man had been endowed in Paradise, so that they might once again understand God's 'Book of Nature', a capacity lost upon Adam's expulsion. In their lodges the Freemasons also attempted to perceive the 'Eternal Light' God had sent out to his chosen people.<sup>56</sup>

The fascination with the notion of paradise and with nature as its mirror was reflected in Russian literature. Under the influence of the cultural trends of deism, pantheism, fascination with Genesis, and Masonic thought, which shaped his thinking in his youth, Karamzin translated Christoph Christian Stürm's (1740–1786) *Unterhaltungen mit Gott* (Conversations with God) as *Besedy s bogom*, published 1787–1789. Karamzin's lyrical essay 'Progulka' (A Walk, 1789) is conceived in a similar spirit and clearly part of the literary tradition of describing 'philosophical' country walks, including Rousseau's *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (Reveries of the Solitary Walker, 1782), or Fontenelle's night walks with a lady interested in astronomy. A further source of inspiration for 'A Walk' was Karamzin's 1787 translation of Thomson's *Seasons* mentioned above.<sup>57</sup> Hammarberg suggests in her study that 'A Walk' describes the narrator's impressions during a country walk, and the reflections arising from his contemplations. As in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, excerpts of which were published between 1791 and 1792, Karamzin's aim is to record everything he sees, feels and hears. His nature studies sometimes include scientific elements, for example when he reflects on the infinity of the universe, wondering whether there is life on other planets. To create poetry is to imitate the idea of Creation. At night, when the protagonist cannot observe nature, he is given to philosophical thoughts about human virtue and life after death. The rising sun is greeted with hymns to Creation. His religious state of self-perception at night is reminiscent of Edward Young's (1683–

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<sup>56</sup> Stephen Lessing Baehr: *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia. Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture*. Stanford University Press: Stanford CA 1991, pp. 90–98.

<sup>57</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the reception of Thomson's *Seasons* in Russia at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Levin 1994, pp. 155–195.

Levin details numerous contemporary Russian translations and adaptations, some based on German or French models, of Thomson's *Seasons*, especially in journal contributions; he also demonstrates the resonance throughout Europe of nature worshipped as an earthly paradise.

1765) *Night-Thoughts* (1742–1745), a book frequently referred to by Sentimentalist literary figures.<sup>58</sup>

The narrator in Karamzin's 'A Walk' is a sensitive man receptive to the beauty of Creation, a feature Karamzin describes in his essay, 'Chto nuzhno avtoru?' (What Does an Author Need?, 1794), where he suggests that a good writer must have a sensitive heart and high virtues. In this concept of the author, there has to be harmony between the external world of inspiration and the author's emotional inner life. Karamzin's essay expresses this view by claiming that a divine gift is spoilt and useless if the vessel which receives it is unclean. In these writings, goodness is an inherent part of a man's character, a concept Karamzin had come to question, however, by the 1790s.<sup>59</sup>

Another way in which Karamzin responded to Sentimentalism's worship of nature was in his reception of Salomon Gessner (1730–1788). The Swiss author wrote idylls populated by shepherds and shepherdesses who sit by the crystalline waters of brooks, or in shady groves, where they listen to the cooing of turtle-doves. Gessner's works had been well-known in Russia since the 1770s. Interest in him, and in Russian translations of his idylls, peaked in the 1790s, but persisted until the 1820s. Joachim Klein argues that, in the 1770s, Gessner's idylls began to eclipse Sumarokov's mainly French-inspired eclogues, whose main topic is love. Gessner's idylls, on the other hand, addressed a wider range of topics including friendship, family, childhood, youth, old age, birth and death, which rendered them appealing to many writers.<sup>60</sup> Numerous works by Karamzin contain references to the Swiss writer, whom he considered the

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<sup>58</sup> Gorbatov, p. 70;

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. Leborgne, Erik (ed.). Flammarion: Paris 1997;

Gitta Hammarberg: 'Karamzin's "Progulka" as Sentimentalist Manifesto'. *Russian Literature* 26, 1989, pp. 249–266;

Kochetkova 1983, p. 127.

It should be noted that Mariia Sushkova, one of Russia's most prolific 18<sup>th</sup>-century women writers, translated this work into Russian, see

Ewington, p. 299.

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Edward Young and the genre of 'graveyard poetry' became very popular in Russia, especially in Masonic circles, see

Levin 1994, pp. 135–152.

<sup>59</sup> Nikolai Karamzin: 'Chto nuzhno avtoru?'. In: Karamzin, Nikolai: *Izbrannye sochineniia*. Makogonenko, G. (ed.). Khudozhestvennaia literatura: Moscow 1964, pp. 120–122;

Rudolf Neuhäuser: 'Karamzin's Spiritual Crisis of 1793 and 1794'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin. Russian Man-of-Letters, Political Thinker, Historian. 1766–1826*. Mouton: The Hague 1975, pp. 56–74, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Ioachim Klein: *Puti kul'turnogo importa. Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka. Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury*: Moscow 2005, pp. 38, 137–139.

epitome of a virtuous author. Karamzin published his translation of Gessner's idyll 'Das hölzerne Bein' (The Wooden Leg) in 1783; his translation of a Gessner biography appeared in 1792.<sup>61</sup>

Sentimentalism's symbolic elevation of nature is represented most clearly in the genre of the pastoral. Alluding to the idea of Horace's *Beatus ille*, it celebrates the deliberate and peaceful pace of life in the country away from the hustle and bustle of the cities. Horace opened his second ode with the words, '*Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis...*', i.e., 'Happy he who, far from the cares of business, ...'. Russian imitations of this ancient model were frequent during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in works by authors who combined an idealised Sentimentalist view of nature with neo-Classicist literary ideals. References to the mythological Golden Age, when humans lived in harmony with each other and with 'Creation', were frequent. The poem 'Priiatnost' sel'skoi zhizni' (The Pleasures of Country Life) by Anna Volkova, for example, illustrates this tendency:

Лишь сельского коснусь я мыслию жилища,  
 Вся восхищаюся природы красатой,  
 Пленяюся ея прелестной пестротой:  
 Она дарует нам то щастие прямое,  
 Которое зовем мы *время золотое*.<sup>62</sup>

*My thoughts touch only country life,  
 I delight forever in nature's beauty,  
 Bewitched by her wondrous diversity:*

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<sup>61</sup> Salomon Gessner: *Idyllen*. Voss, Ernst (ed.). Reclam Jun.: Stuttgart 1988; Anthony Cross: 'Karamzin's Versions of the Idyll'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin*, pp. 75–90 (p. 75).

On one of the early Russian women writers to produce an adaptation of Gessner's idylls, Elizaveta Kheraskova, see Ewington p. 43.

On Gessner's international reception, see Gabrielle Bersier: 'Arcadia Revitalized. The International Appeal of Gessner's Idylls in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In: Grimm, Reinhold / Hermand, Jost (eds): *From the Greeks to the Greens. Images of the Simple Life*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 1989, pp. 34–47.

On Gessner in Russia, see also R.Iu. Danilevskii: *Rossii i Shveitsarii. Literaturnye sviazi XVIII—XIX vv.* Nauka: Leningrad 1984, pp. 64–78.

<sup>62</sup> Anna Volkova: In: *Stikhotvoreniia. Morskaia Tipografiia*: St Petersburg 1807. 'Priiatnost' sel'skoi zhizni', pp. 43–45 (p. 44).

*She gives us that immediate joy*

*We call a golden time.*<sup>63</sup>

The idealisation of nature was often associated with literary reflections on the transitoriness of life and its material aspects, such as wealth and rank. This kind of theme was particularly present in Masonic thought with its emphasis on inner values and life after death. Many works by Sumarokov and Kheraskov address the fleeting nature of human life. It is a tendency associated with the high value attributed to the neo-Stoic notion of *spokoïstvie* (tranquillity) in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russia. The poem 'Vodopad' (The Waterfall), written by Gavrila Derzhavin (1743–1816) between 1791 and 1794, manifests the notion that a contemplative way of life is preferable to worldly goods and glory. The poem uses metaphors which originate in male domains, e.g. the image of a warlord eager to acquire immortal glory, whose efforts are compared to the noise and short lifespan of the waterfall: Derzhavin's poem suggests that humans will fall from the height of their glory just as the water noisily cascades down the waterfall, which is unfavourably compared to the peaceful babbling of a brook, a literary device which adumbrates literary Sentimentalism.<sup>64</sup>

### **The equation of woman with nature**

The idealisation of nature in Sentimentalist discourse was linked with specific gender patterns. Nature is an earthly paradise, God the world's architect and craftsman, and man the agriculturalist who cultivates God's garden. In panegyric odes, similar features are attributed to the ruler who imitates God's example when restoring a terrestrial paradise in Russia.<sup>65</sup> The myth of Peter the Great as tsar and carpenter is associated with these images. The place and role of woman, however, is different. Being the symbol of and in tune with nature, she does no work to transform the paradisiacal

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<sup>63</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>64</sup> K. Nazaretskaia: 'Ob istokakh russkogo sentimentalizma'. In: Guliaev, N. (ed.): *Voprosy etiki i teorii literatury*. Izd. Kazanskogo Universiteta: Kazan' 1963, pp. 3–34 (pp. 9–11); Andrew Kahn: "'Blazhenstvo ne v luchakh porfira". Histoire et fonction de la tranquillité (*spokoïstvie*) dans la pensée et la poésie russes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. De Kantemir au sentimentalisme'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 669–688;

Gavrila Derzhavin: Gukovskii, Grigorii (ed.): *Stikhotvoreniia*. Izdatel'stvo pisatelei v Leningrade: Leningrad 1933. 'Vodopad', pp. 163–177;

V. Bazanov: 'Ogliadyvaia's' na proidennyi put'. K sporam o Derzhavine i Karamzine'. In: Berkov, P. / Makogonenko, G. / Serman, I. (eds): *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII—nachala XIX veka*. (XVIII vek 8). Nauka: Leningrad 1969, pp. 18–40 (pp. 22–23).

<sup>65</sup> Baehr, pp. 65–89.

garden. And as the culture of her time has attributed to her an immaculate soul by virtue of her sex, her very being mirrors Creation. Panegyric odes reveal the difference: while the tsar is considered his country's universal engineer, angelic features are often ascribed to the tsarina.<sup>66</sup>

Karamzin reproduces Sentimentalism's equation of woman with nature in his novella *Poor Liza*: Erast, the aristocratic male protagonist, flees from the allegedly corrupted world of civilisation, seeking refuge in the primordial goodness of nature. He falls in love with Liza, a peasant girl who epitomises Sentimentalism's fascination with nature. The narrator comments on the unrealistic Sentimentalist view of women and nature in the following ironic terms:

Он читывал романы, идиллии; имел довольно живое воображение и часто переселялся мысленно в те времена (бывшие или не бывшие), в которые, если верить стихотворцам, все люди беспечно гуляли по лугам, купались в чистых источниках, целовались, как горлицы, отдыхали под розами и миртами и в счастливой праздности все дни свои проживали. Ему казалось, что он нашел в Лизе то, чего сердце его давно искало. "Натура призывает меня в свои объятия, к чистым своим радостям", — думал он и решился — по крайней мере на время — оставить большой свет.<sup>67</sup>

*He read novels, idylls; he had a vivid enough imagination and often transported himself mentally to those times (real or imagined), in which, if the poets are to be believed, all people endlessly wandered through meadows, bathed in pure springs, kissed like doves, rested beneath roses and myrtle and lived all their days in happy idleness. It seemed to him that in Liza he had found what his*

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<sup>66</sup> Joachim Klein observes an intriguing inversion of this paradigm in a panegyric ode by Gavrila Derzhavin to Alexander I, in which the author ascribes 'feminine', angelic features to the tsar. This ode may well reflect the then current cult of feminisation. I am grateful to Joachim Klein for drawing my attention to his article. Joachim Klein: 'Russisches Herrscherlob. Deržavin's "Hymne auf die Sanftmut"'. *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 37, 2013, pp. 42–55.

On Derzhavin as an author of a more intimate type of panegyric odes, see also N.Iu. Alekseevna: *Russkaia oda. Razvitie odicheskoi formy v XVII—XVIII vekakh*. Nauka: St. Petersburg 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Nikolai Karamzin: *Bednaia Liza*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: Moscow 1950, p. 15.

*heart had long sought. 'Nature calls me to her embraces, to her pure joys' he thought, and decided — at least for a time — to leave the everyday world.*<sup>68</sup>

In Sentimentalist literature, nature is often called the Creator's 'daughter'. Behind female nature stands a male deity turning nature into the motherless daughter of a patriarchal god whose will, authority and omnipotence manifest themselves in every single aspect of nature, no matter how minute or majestic. Such gender-specific connotations of nature and other natural phenomena are reflected in the works of many Sentimentalist writers, both male and female. In their collection of poems published in 1802, for instance, the sisters Mariia and Elizaveta Moskvina associate the earth with femininity. 'Buria' (The Storm) is a poem in which the earth, initially described in idyllic terms, is being attacked by a storm. Personified earth expresses 'her' suffering in direct speech:

И земля из недр рыдала,  
Глас свой к небу простирала:  
«Я жестоку казнь терплю!...  
«Чем же так тебя гневлю?  
«Долг свой верно исполняю,  
«Всем дары я ристочаю,  
«Не смеюся над трудом,  
«А оплачена я злом.

*And the world wept from its depths,  
It raised its voice to the heavens:  
'I endure cruel punishments!...  
How have I angered you so?  
Faithfully I've done my duty,  
Given gifts to everyone,  
I do not laugh at work to do,  
But I'm repaid with spite.'*<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>69</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



‘Luna i solntse’ (The Moon and the Sun), another poem by the Moskvina sisters, provides a further illustration of the Sentimentalist tendency to associate masculinity with symbols of authority from the natural world. It relates how the lyrical persona was initially fascinated by the beauty of the moon but came to understand the sun to be the true leader of the universe. In many late-18<sup>th</sup>-century poems, the sun features as a symbol of the Creator, and therefore carries masculine connotations.<sup>70</sup>

Images of woman associated with nature, spring and paradise go back to antiquity, to the Greek myth of Persephone, who is abducted into the Underworld by Hades and whose grief transforms the world into a barren, bleak and inhospitable place.<sup>71</sup> A similar pattern occurs in the pastoral, where a young girl personifies happiness and spring’s Edenic nature. If the shepherd’s beloved reciprocates his feelings and is close to him, his heart is filled with happiness; nature seems to be an idyllic and pleasant place, or *locus amoenus*. Her absence, by contrast, causes torments described in images recalling depictions of hell; the world becomes a dark and desolate place, a *locus terribilis*.

In Chapter Four on Pospelova I will discuss the fact that late-18<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions of the *locus terribilis* surrounding the abject shepherd often included Gothic imagery such as graveyards and otherworldly visions of the beloved. Russian readers became acquainted with Gothic literature in the 1780s, which is when translations of Thomas Gray’s (1716–1771) ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ (1751) began to appear. Karamzin’s 1792 adaptation of a poem by Ludwig Kosegarten, ‘Des Grabes Furchtbarkeit und Lieblichkeit’ (The Awesomeness and Loveliness of the Grave),<sup>72</sup> was his response to the Gothic aesthetic outlined in German and English Romanticism; his 1794 novel, *Ostrov Borngol’m* (The Island of Bornholm), also reproduces Gothic imagery in its depiction of a tyrant who holds a young woman in a dungeon.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Moskvina, Mariia / Moskvina, Elizaveta: *Aoniia ili sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Universitetskaia Tipografiia: Moscow 1802. ‘Buria’, p. 27; ‘Luna i solntse’, p. 38.

For more information on the Moskvina sisters, see Ewington, pp. 423–427.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Persephone. Kore’. In: *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* (16 vols). Canick, Hubert / Schneider, Helmuth (eds), 16 vols., Metzler: Stuttgart 2000, Vol. IX, pp. 600–603.

<sup>72</sup> See Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten: *Poesien*. Gräff: Leipzig 1788/1798, pp. 233–245.

<sup>73</sup> Neuhäuser 1975, p. 60.

Sumarokov and other classicist poets employ imagery from Petrarchan love lyrics to describe the shepherd's emotional hell, describing the abject male lover's heart as burning, with poison running through his veins, and the glances of the beloved person striking him like arrows. He cannot appreciate the beauty of blossoming nature while his beloved is absent; on the contrary, he suffers all the more acutely. Eventually, death seems to be the only escape from his pain.

In pastorals, it is usually the male shepherd who complains about unrequited love.<sup>74</sup> The absence of his beloved causes him to express his feelings in abundant lyrical monologues. The underlying gender pattern functionalises woman insofar as her role is to create happiness. To test the authenticity of his feelings, and to demonstrate her virtuous character, she often feigns indifference towards the shepherd. Her own feelings, by contrast, remain unspoken; she never expresses despair in the face of unrequited love. She is a mute symbol of happiness and spring, always in tune with the beauty of Creation.

### **The female character of Fate in emerging Romanticism**

The first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an increasing interest in folk culture, which found its reflection in literary works. Poets both male and female began to merge classical characters, including the uncontrollable force of Fate, with divinities from Russian folklore. Frequent references to the uncontrollable force of Fate during this period express the Romantic scepticism about the goodness of the (male) human heart, which had prevailed in Sentimentalist thought.

*Evgenii i Iulia*, (Eugene and Julia, 1784), is the first of Karamzin's writings to focus on the influence of fate. Her destructive powers feature most distinctly, however, in his novella *The Island of Bornholm* (1793), where he expresses a pessimistic worldview insofar as his characters are incapable not only of moral self-improvement by means of education, but also of overcoming anti-social instincts. By

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On the Gothic in Russian literature, see the following collection of articles: Cornwell, Neil (ed.): *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 1999.

In particular, the following contributions in this collection pertain to the topic outlined above:

Derek Offord: 'Karamzin's Gothic Tale. *The Island of Bornholm*', pp. 37–58;

Alessandra Tosi: 'At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel. Nikolai Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Gerra* (1803)', pp. 59–82;

Michael Pursglove: 'Does the Russian Gothic Verse Exist? The Case of Vasilii Zhukovskii', pp. 83–101.

<sup>74</sup> Joachim Klein: *Die Schäferdichtung des russischen Klassizismus*. Harrasowitz: Berlin 1988, p. 75.

now Karamzin has completely abandoned the belief in innate goodness adopted from Rousseau after his break from the Freemasons in his youth. His novella *Moia ispoved'* (My Confession, 1802) is a sarcastic response to Rousseau's *Confessions*.<sup>75</sup>

Russian literature from 1800 until 1820 presents Fate in a way that reveals some of the character's evolutionary stages. As the personification of forces beyond human control, Fate is invariably female, appearing either — in antiquity — as a demi-goddess endowed with the authority to reign over life and death, or — in political ideology — as a disruptive element. In Greek and Roman mythology, the Fates are three women who spin, weave and cut the thread and fabric of human lives. The myth has survived Christianisation; as Mary Kelly has found in her study on ritual textiles among Slav village women, it crops up in Slavonic folk traditions:

In Bulgaria, when a baby (for example, a prematurely born infant) was in danger of dying, a magic ritual that echoes Russian practice was enacted. A shirt was made by three women who, in the darkness of night, stripped off their clothes and let their hair loose. Standing on the roof of the house, they had to weave a piece of cloth there and sew it into a baby's shirt before the first rooster crowed. This magic shirt was then put immediately on the baby to keep it alive. [...] Ukrainian tradition preserves a similar housetop ritual.<sup>76</sup>

There is a striking resemblance between the three Fates and the three women's activity of weaving and being in charge of a human life. Their loose hair, moreover, is in keeping with the unbraided hair which, as Faith Wigzell observes, was an essential element in invocations of pagan (hence unclean) powers during divination rituals.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> G. Ionin: 'Anakreonticheskie stikhi Karamazina i Derzhavina'. In: Berkov, P. (ed.): *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII – nachala XIX veka*. (XVIII vek 8), Nauka: Leningrad 1969, pp. 162–178 (p. 177);

Neuhäuser 1975, p. 63;

Gorbatov, p. 81;

V. Vatsuro: 'Literaturno-filosofskaia problematika povesti Karamzina *Ostrov Borngol'm'*'. In: Berkov, P. (ed.): *Derzhavin i Karamzin*, pp. 190–209 (pp. 206–208);

Ilya Serman: 'Chateaubriand et Karamzin, témoins de leur temps'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 701–718 (pp. 706–707).

<sup>76</sup> Mary Kelly: 'The Ritual Fabrics of Russian Village Women'. In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia — Women — Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 152–176 (174–175).

<sup>77</sup> Faith Wigzell: *Reading Russian Fortunes. Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998, p. 47.

Fortune as the personification of an indomitable power appears in a number of 18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literary works by women and men. It is commonplace to complain about her unfairness and unpredictability. As in Volkova's poem 'K moei podruge' (To My Lady Friend),<sup>78</sup> the name of Fortune very often simply serves as a metaphor for (economic) wealth. Also quite frequent is the idea that one may be able to shield oneself from Fortune's blows by retreating to a life of contemplation in the country — but only if one is receptive to nature's beauty. When saying that nature has taught her to abhor the transitoriness of Fortune's gifts, Volkova's lyrical persona openly expresses her disdain for the high value attributed to wealth. In her view, Fortune (representing economic wealth) is opposed to nature; true happiness resides in a pure soul and can only be achieved through the appreciation of nature.<sup>79</sup>

The notion that a Horatian idealisation of the countryside helps people to develop inner strength and to grow indifferent to the upheavals of life also appears in the writings of Kheraskov, the author of a number of moralising poems. In 'Spokoïstvie' (Tranquillity), his narrator claims that man can only avoid being 'Fortune's slave' by living far from the temptations of the city, for example on a nobleman's estate. Here the Stoicist believes to have achieved such a degree of inner strength that he dares to challenge Fortune to try and upset his calm.<sup>80</sup> However, his tone implies that he needs to rely upon (latent) aggression in his dealings with Fortune and her inconsistent machinations, a position which contradicts stoic indifference. Parallels with underlying gender-specific aspects related to republican ideals suggest that for man to be in control of his passions, he must suppress any female or feminine aspects.

In the works of Nikolai L'vov (1751–1803), a writer, architect and collector of Russian folk songs, Fortune is explicitly associated with sexual connotations. The lyrical persona in 'Fortuna' (Fortune), a poem written in 1797 from his country estate to a friend, shows respect for, as well as anger towards, the female character. He protests that he has been unable to catch this 'fickle', 'flying', 'naked Madam', to whom

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<sup>78</sup> Volkova 1807, 'K moei podruge', pp. 67–71 (p. 71).

<sup>79</sup> The idealisation of nature and virtue as opposed to the corrupting effect of wealth which features in the works of many contemporary authors may have been influenced by the French author Jean-François Marmontel (1723–1799). His works, which include moralising tales, were translated by many Russian women and men from the 1760s onwards; see Rosslyn, *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness*, 2000, pp. 75–76.

<sup>80</sup> G. Pospelov: 'U istokov russkogo sentimentalizma'. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta* 1, 1948, pp. 3–17 (pp. 11–16).

humans are as insignificant as toads or grass-snakes. Here, Fortune is not only sexually provocative ('naked'), she can also fly like a witch. Any attempts at a rational, scientific explanation of her dealings are futile because hers is a dark, devilish force:

Зовет фортуной свет ученый  
 Сию мадам: но тут не тот  
 (Прости, господь) у них расчет:  
 Они морочат мир крещеный!  
 Поверь мне, друг мой, это черт...<sup>81</sup>

*The educated world call this lady  
 Fortune: but in this they have  
 (Forgive me, God), not reckoned right:  
 They do deceive the Christian world!  
 Believe me, friend, this is the devil...<sup>82</sup>*

Well aware that Fortune will not be pleased to hear these words, the narrator tempers the sharpness of his outbursts pretending to have lost his mind. As in Kheraskov, the beneficial effect of the countryside is a panacea for the blows of Fortune. It also brings a Sentimentalist re-evaluation of the domestic sphere insofar as those fortunate enough to live in the countryside can spend their evenings in the company of their families, resting beneath lime trees. Rural domestic bliss is the reward for men who have renounced material pursuits such as a career in the city or at court. L'vov's 'Fortune' presents a courtier who might well be Fortune's 'favourite', but whose busy life brings him no happiness: he has no freedom, he is obliged to 'dance', and finds no time to sleep because to do so would lose him Fortune's benevolence.

The description of a courtier's hectic life illustrates a common scepticism in Sentimentalist culture towards careerism and Enlightenment ideals of activism in the pursuit of public virtue. The notion of service has begun to be associated with self-interest. Moreover, the character of Fortune as a woman who reigns at court and of whom men seek favour is reminiscent of Catherine the Great's rule and favouritism,

<sup>81</sup> Nikolai L'vov: 'Fortuna'. In: Serman, Il'ia / Makogonenko, Georgii (eds): *Poety XVIII veka. 1780—1790kh godov*. Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1972, pp. 236–240 (p. 240).

<sup>82</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

which often took on the guise of a gamble.<sup>83</sup> The poem may well be an expression of male frustration at being unable to exert any influence in the public sphere of the state. Another feature which L'vov ascribes to Fortune is that of the evil and irresponsible mother (*matushka chrezmerno bestolkova*). Finally, in another poem, 'Schast'e i Fortuna' (Happiness and Fortune), L'vov associates Fortune with the notion of luxury when he depicts her as a wealthy bride, whose abundant dowry and need for social interaction render the life of her partner, Happiness, unbearable, compelling him to leave her to go and live in the family of Love.<sup>84</sup>

Explicit female connotations with Fortune also occur in the work of Ivan Dmitriev (1760–1837), a poet and friend of Karamzin's. In 'Iskateli Fortuny' (Seekers of Fortune), having declared that Fortune is a woman (*Fortuna zhenshchina*), the male narrator advises the reader to treat her like any other woman: ignoring Fortune will force her to pay attention to him. In another poem, 'Pustynnik i Fortuna' (The Hermit and Fortune), Fortune is depicted as a wealthy woman of loose morals who attempts to lure him away from his faithful wife, destroying the protagonist's peaceful family life in a humble cabin.<sup>85</sup>

One of the attributes of luxury associated with Fortune is the chariot, as illustrated by Volkova's poem, 'Razмышlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastiia' (Reflection on the Vicissitudes and Inconstancy of Luck). Here the lyrical persona muses about a world in which

... каждый быв страстей в неволе  
Клянет немилосердый рок,  
Вздыхает в злополучной доле,  
И горьких слез лиет поток;

<sup>83</sup> Iurii Lotman: *Izbrannye stat'i*, 3 vols., Aleksandra: Tallin 1992, (3 vols). Vol. II, pp. 240–242; In the 1790s, toward the end of Catherine the Great's reign, pornographic caricatures of the empress printed in London began to appear and pornographic depictions of her were published in Western fiction; see

John T. Alexander: 'Catherine the Great as Porn Queen'. In: Levitt, M. / Toporkov, A. (eds): *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*. Ladimir: Moscow 1999, pp. 237–248, and  
Larry Wolff: 'The Fantasy of Catherine in the Fiction of the Enlightenment. From Baron Munchausen to the Marquis de Sade'. In: Levitt, M. / Toporkov, A. (eds): *Eros and Pornography*, pp. 249–261.  
On pornography in the age of Enlightenment, see also the following articles in the same collection: Manfred Schrub: 'K spetsifike barkoviany na fone frantsuzskoi pornografii', pp. 200–218; and Marcus C. Levitt: 'Barkoviana and Russian Classicism', pp. 219–236.

<sup>84</sup> L'vov: 'Schast'e i Fortuna'. In: *Poety XVIII veka*, pp. 397–400.

<sup>85</sup> Ivan Dmitriev: 'Iskateli Fortuny'. 'Pustynnik i Fortuna', In: Nikolai Karamzin / Ivan Dmitriev: *Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia*. Kucherov, A. (ed.). Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1953, pp. 373–375, 384–385.

Фортуны гордой к колеснице  
 Прикован в след ея течет,  
 Непостоянной сей Царице  
 Всечасно гимны в честь поет;  
 К ней длани робки простирая,  
 В душе сомнение храня,  
 Ея улыбки ожидая  
 Проводит дни свои стена.<sup>86</sup>

*All who've been in thrall to passions  
 Curse merciless fortune,  
 Sigh in their ill-received lot,  
 And weep a flood of tears;  
 Bound to follow in the wake  
 Of proud fortune's chariot,  
 And to sing eternally  
 Hymns in praise of this protean Queen;  
 Stretching humble hands to her,  
 Nursing doubt within his soul,  
 Always waiting for her smile  
 His wretched days are filled with moans.<sup>87</sup>*

Here, even though there is none of the aggression and challenges which occur in the works by Kheraskov, L'vov or Dmitriev, Fortune is presented as a proud and inconsistent woman.

Urusova's 'K sud'be' (To Fate, 1811) does not address Fortune, who delivers worldly goods, but Fate, who determines people's lives. It displays aspects of late-18<sup>th</sup>-century pietistic and stoic tendencies. The way in which the lyrical persona confesses her guilt makes it clear that humans ought to accept Fate's dealings:

Судьба! перед тобой виновна я была;

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<sup>86</sup> Volkova 1807, 'Razmyshlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastiia' pp. 62–66 (p. 62).

<sup>87</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Тобой довольна быть я в жизни не могла;  
 Тебя винила я, против тебя роптала,  
 Тебя всех бедств моих причиною считала.

*Fate! I was guilty before you;  
 Never satisfied with you in life;  
 I muttered accusations against you,  
 And thought you the cause of all my woes.*<sup>88</sup>

These lines show respect for a female authority. In prayer-like words, the humble narrator asks to be forgiven for her complaints. Rather than Fortune, L'vov's force of darkness, Fate is a source of light and enlightenment:

Ты тайно действуешь, премудро управляешь,  
 И нашу тьму своим сияньем разгоняешь.  
 Ты чистою себя любовью вспламеня,  
 Сражалась много раз со мною за меня.<sup>89</sup>

*You work in secret, direct things most wisely,  
 And banish darkness with your radiance.  
 And blazing with your purest love,  
 You've often battled me for my own sake.*<sup>90</sup>

Fighting for her protégés' souls, Fate here symbolises Christian values; later on, she is described as beneficent and generous. Although the poem contains notions of a battle, it feels different from Kheraskov's. Here, it is Fate herself who is struggling to prevent humans from vain pursuits, trying to protect them from these evils with her own hands, teaching detachment from worldly gains, and providing happiness and peace. Urusova's Fate is perceived as a saviour, with whom the lyrical persona does not quarrel, submitting to her will instead.

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<sup>88</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>89</sup> Urusova: 'K sud'be'. In: *Chtenie* 4, 1811, pp. 105–106.

For a biographical background, recent studies, and translations of some of Urusova's poems, see Ewington 2014, pp. 59–295.

<sup>90</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



## Summary

Chapter Two has discussed some of the literary impacts of Sentimentalist gender conceptions in Russia. The feminisation of literary culture had a positive impact insofar as it made education more accessible to women, a tendency which manifested itself in the increase of boarding schools for girls, for instance. Sentimentalist interest in reading may have contributed to this development: Unlike during Classicism, when reading was the privilege of an elite, reading now became accessible to people from all social classes, including women. Novels and minor poetic genres became fashionable; they replaced drama and epic prose, the genres which had been most highly regarded during Classicism. Despite these tendencies towards democratisation, most people living in Russia were illiterate and excluded from these cultural achievements. A similar ambiguity can be found in the increase of women's magazines. On the one hand, they provided women with reading material, helping them to participate in the cultural debates of their time. On the other hand, however, many of them focused on fashion rather than literature, and tended to trivialise women.

Literary salons, whose number began to increase during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offered women an opportunity to enhance their education and a platform for intellectual exchange. In the provinces, cultural centres and salons providing women with occasions to participate in culture also began to emerge. The major cities, however, remained the centres for this type of activity. Even though it became easier to embrace reading and culture, living in the provinces still presented a disadvantage for women who wished for recognition as writers.

Sentimentalism's egalitarian principles were reflected in literary works, which began to discuss the notion of the unconditional value of all human beings. The institution of serfdom was criticised, especially after the nobles, released from state service, had returned to their estates, where they came into close proximity with the consequences of serfdom. The use of the genre of the pastoral reflected the dichotomy which resulted from this more direct observation of nature and serfdom. The figure of the agricultural worker in pastorals was used to criticise serfdom, whereas the figure of the shepherd represents the genre's idealising tendencies. In the genre of the comic opera, the figure of the serf was even trivialised and functionalised.

Sentimentalism's democratic tendency further manifested itself in discussions about women's social inequality, in parts of Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women', for example, which includes Decembrist vocabulary albeit applied to the woman question. The downside of the Sentimentalist elevation of femininity was that it objectified and functionalised women, whose alleged innate goodness was considered to be an ideal precondition for them to judge the quality of literary works, but not necessarily to become authors.

A typical feature of Sentimentalism was its worship of nature and its conception of nature as an earthly paradise, as manifested in Karamzin's well known 'A Walk' and in his response to Gessner's works. Nature was perceived in female terms, which reflected itself in many pastorals and also in Karamzin's novella *Poor Liza*. Eventually, the character of Fate as an element which disrupts idyllic country life also appeared in many early Romanticist works. Fate was always perceived in female terms; in works written by men, references to her often carried sexual connotations.

## Chapter Three

### Responses to Sentimentalist Gender Conceptions

This chapter discusses responses of Russian women writers to topics in Sentimentalist culture and literature, including displays of modesty as a publication strategy, as reflected, for instance, in the prefaces of women authors. My investigation further argues that some aspects at least of the Sentimentalist focus on the private sphere were beneficial to women writers, making them feel appreciated in their everyday social roles. Once they realised that they were in the spotlight, some women writers embarked on subtle challenges of the social inequalities they were subject to. I will also suggest that Sentimentalist equation of woman with nature provided women authors with poetic metaphors which allowed them to justify their activities as writers. Along with elevated Sentimentalist regard for femininity, some women authors began to revise the ways in which female characters were represented, in particular challenging Sentimentalist notions of female naivety and death.

#### The obstacles of decency, virtue, and modesty

Women writers found different ways to respond to the topics in Sentimentalist culture and literature. In order to express their opinions, however, they had to overcome several obstacles. If they wished to draw attention to the inequality experienced in the private sphere of the home, for example, they had to transgress the criterion of decency. Although a fundamental feature of Sentimentalist ethics was to shed light on different human experiences, including those of women, only a restricted number of subjects found their way into literature. Decency, a principal feature of Classicist aesthetics, remained the main selection criterion for topics in Sentimentalist narratives.<sup>1</sup> Literary criticism of the social situation of women therefore had to occur within these constraints. This is why the Sentimentalist focus on the private sphere succeeded only in part to shed light on the problems women faced in a patriarchal society. This suggests that it was particularly difficult for women to address this topic since they were even more strongly subject to the notion of decency than men. Moreover, women writers were not supposed to display their interest in learning:

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Schönle: 'The Scare of the Self'. *Slavic Review* 57, 1998, pp. 723–746 (p. 745).

erudition conflicted with the Sentimentalist image of women, as Diana Greene has shown in her study of Elizaveta Kul'man (1808–1825).<sup>2</sup>

A woman wishing to publish a literary work was an affront to the ideal of modesty and domestic decency associated with the female sex. The example of Mariia and Elizaveta Moskvina illustrates the pretence of reluctance forced on any Sentimentalist woman writer who wished to share her work with a wider readership. One critic claims that they had to be *persuaded* to publish their works by men of letters. Similarly, in the preface to one of her works, Liubov' Krichevskaiia assures her readers that her friends had approved of her works, requesting their publication.<sup>3</sup> This kind of imposed female modesty was also reflected in Western European literature. In a scene in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) novel *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Travels), published in 1821, for instance, it is only on her friend's strong insistence that artist Hilarie allows the male guests to see her paintings.<sup>4</sup> When Karolina Pavlova read her poems to the *habitués* of her salon in the 1840s, she clashed with social conventions of female modesty, provoking an unflattering portrait by Ivan Panaev, one of her visitors.<sup>5</sup>

A further difficulty for an aspiring woman author was the need to find a mentor. Unwritten rules of decency permitted a woman to approach an editor only on her mentor's approval. The publication of Volkova's poems, for instance, was initiated after her mother had mentioned them to Alexander Shishkov (1754–1841). In the foreword to her collection, he claims to approve of their quality. If a woman was sufficiently wealthy, she might venture to publish her works without a mentor's protection. However, to do so was still regarded as provocative, as illustrated in the

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Greene: 'Nineteenth-Century Women Poets. Critical Reception vs. Self-Definition'. In: Clyman, Toby W. / Greene, Diana (eds): *Women Writers in Russian Literature*. Greenwood Press: London 1994, pp. 94–109 (pp. 97–98).

<sup>3</sup> [Anon.]: 'Mariia Osipovna Moskvina'. *Damskii zhurnal* 27, 1830, pp. 6–8 (p. 6); M. Makarov: 'Mariia Timofeevna Pospelova'. *Damskii zhurnal* 16, 1830, pp. 34–38 (p. 35); Liubov Krichevskaiia: *No Good without Reward. Selected Writings. A Bilingual Edition*. Baer, Brian James (ed.). Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies: Toronto 2011, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister*. Trunz, Erich (ed.). Beck: München 1989, p. 237: '... die ältere Freundin schwieg daher nicht länger, sondern tadelte Hilarien, dass sie mit ihrer eigenen Geschicklichkeit hervortreten auch diesmal, wie immer, zaudere; hier sei die Frage nicht, gelobt oder getadelt zu werden, sondern zu lernen.'

In English: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister's Travels, or the Renunciants*. Carlyle, Thomas (transl.). Chapman and Hall: London 1899, p. 314: 'Her companion, therefore, kept silence no longer, but blamed Hilaria for not coming forward with her own accomplishment, but lingering in this case as she always did; now where the question was not of being praised or blamed, but of being instructed.'

<sup>5</sup> V. Gromov: 'Vstupitel'naia stat'ia'. In: Karolina Pavlova: *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Gaidenkov, N. (ed.). Sovetskii pisatel': Moscow 1964, p. 9.

case of Mariia Izvekova, who had her works printed without previously consulting anyone about their quality, which left Moscow's high society bewildered. Anna Bunina was one of the few women poets of the period to succeed in emancipating herself from her mentor's supervision. She published the original version of her poem, 'Padenie Faetona' (The Fall of Phaethon), without adopting any of the changes he had suggested.<sup>6</sup>

Women who decided to become professional writers stood in particular conflict with Sentimentalist men's expectations, who could only perceive of women writers in the role of a dilettante. Bunina encountered considerable difficulties in her determined endeavour to make a living as a writer.<sup>7</sup> It is on this evidence that doubts arose in the 1990s about the extent to which Karamzin's 'feminisation' of literature actually democratised relations between the sexes. According to American and Western European feminist literary studies, the notion of femininity was a male-defined concept which, despite woman's symbolic elevation, ultimately maintained gender-specific power relations.

It cannot be denied that the Sentimentalist conception of women preserved traditional gender patterns, since any literary production by a woman was regarded as a manifestation of her innate goodness. However, this should not prevent us from appreciating the democratic potential of the practice of accepting literary works by women from a wide range of backgrounds, even if this was due to essentialist assumptions. It should also be noted that, at the time, women often wrote literary works despite a limited mastery of the Russian language. Girls' education prioritised practical subjects such as housekeeping and needlework over intellectual ones; it was only after 1812 that the study of the Russian language became a compulsory subject in educational institutions for women. Before then, educated women were fluent in French rather than Russian. If men acted as mentors and editors of women's literary

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<sup>6</sup> Anna Volkova: *Stikhotvoreniia*. Morskaia Tipografiia: St Petersburg 1807. 'Preduredomlenie ot izdatelia sei knigi', [foreword n.p.];

Karolin Khaider: "'V sei knizhke est' chto-to zanimatel'noe, no... ": Vospriiatie russkikh pisatel'nits v *Damskom zhurnale*'. In: Shore, Elizabeth (ed.): *Pol — Gender — Kul'tura. Nemetskie i russkie issledovaniia*. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi humanitarnyi universitet: Moscow 2000, pp. 131–153 (p. 146); Wendy Rosslyn: 'Conflicts over Gender and Status in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature. The Case of Anna Bunina and her Poem "Padenie Faetona"'. In: Marsh, Rosalind (ed.): *Gender and Russian Literature. New Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1996, pp. 55–74 (pp. 55–57).

<sup>7</sup> Wendy Rosslyn: 'Anna Bunina's "Unchaste Relationship with the Muses". Patronage, the Market and the Woman Writer in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 74, 1996, pp. 223–242.

productions, it was not always a malicious act of patronage, but a way of helping women to improve their writing skills and editing their works for publication. There may also be a correlation between this practice and the increased number of female authors between 1820 and 1840 observed by Mikhail Fainshtein. Recent studies have noted the paradox that Sentimentalism's 'feminisation' of Russian culture seems to have inspired women to take up the pen despite their instrumentalisation and reduction to essentialist assumptions.<sup>8</sup>

Woman's situation in society was another issue addressed by Sentimentalist authors of either sex. Since women were regarded as sources of beauty and virtue, however, Sentimentalist discourse afforded to men alone the right to discuss women's social inequality. Nor were women permitted to use expressions which might display their intellectual power:

'In consequence of' and 'in order that' are unseemly coming from the mouth of 'a woman who, if we are to trust Ariost's portrait, was more beautiful than Venus'.<sup>9</sup>

Sentimentalist ethics banned women from the public sphere and, hence, from politics. Therefore, the writing of political pamphlets was denied to women who wanted to speak out against social injustice, both in real life and in the popular literature of the time. Some women therefore resorted to the use of poetry as a means of expressing their criticism, often embedding their messages in collections of idyllic poems and in poems about friendship and spring deemed to be appropriate for women. This is illustrated in some poems by Alexandra Murzina published in 1799. They refer to the intrinsic equal value of all human beings, accusing men of arrogance for their refusal to

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<sup>8</sup> Natal'ia Pushkareva: 'Russian Noblewomen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18<sup>th</sup>- and Early-19<sup>th</sup>-Century Memoirs'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 111–128 (p. 116);

Mikhail Fainshtein: 'Russkie pisatel' nitsy 1820–1840 godov'. In: Göpfert, Frank (ed.): *Russland aus der Feder seiner Frauen. Zum femininen Diskurs in der russischen Literatur*. Sagner: München 1992, pp. 29–33 (p. 29);

Carolyn Heyder / Arja Rosenholm: 'Feminization as Functionalisation. The Presentation of Femininity by the Sentimentalist Man'. In: *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*, pp. 51–71 (p. 64–65).

<sup>9</sup> '«Вследствие чего» et «дабы» sont insupportables dans la bouche «d'une femme qui, d'après le portrait de l'Arioste, était plus belle que Vénus»'. Quoted in Jean Breuillard: 'Positions féministes dans la vie littéraire russe. Fin du XVIIIe et début du XIXe siècle'. *L'Enseignement du russe* 22, 1976, pp. 4–24, (pp. 7–13). Translation by Emily Lygo.

acknowledge the fact that God has created equally gifted men and women.<sup>10</sup> Although Murzina's work largely reproduces Sentimentalist literary ideals, it also demonstrates the potential for feminist criticism in adopting the liberal ideals which circulated in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tapping into this potential, some women freed themselves from men's goodwill to articulate criticism of their oppression.

One woman who dared to enter the domain of literary criticism was the anonymous author of a review of Rousseau's *Julie*. Published in 1814, it bears the subtitle, 'Pis'mo rossiianki' (A Letter by a Russian Woman).<sup>11</sup> The author firstly justifies her incursion into the traditionally male domain of literary criticism by declaring that she does not aspire to enter the august world of literature but merely intends to give a piece of advice to a fellow Russian woman. She then proceeds to attack Rousseau's famous novel for being unrealistic in representing a man who expresses his desire for a woman in terms which flout the requirements of decency and are neither acceptable nor intelligible to a virtuous woman. She adduces several precise examples to illustrate her observations. The review's critical spirit reflects a cultural climate which encourages an increasing number of women to question the implications of Sentimentalist discourse on their lives, and to apply their critical minds and writing skills to the exposure of some of patriarchal society's less savoury aspects.

In a culture which imposed essentialist conceptions on most women, some of them adopted the image of a morally superior being capable of effecting a morally improved society in order to break down the barriers between the public and private domains. Teaching the values of virtue was one way in which such women managed to enter and transfer values from the private, female realm into the (male) public sphere. Reinforcing an idealised image of woman, their endeavours occasionally produced contrary results, however. Elshtain observes a similar mechanism in the suffragettes' attempts to justify their access to the public forum of politics by claiming that a 'new

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Vowles: 'The "Feminization" of Russian Literature. Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, pp. 35–60 (p. 51). For an English translation of this poem and an introduction to Murzina, see Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, pp. 403–413.

See also my article on this topic,

Ursula Stohler: 'Released from Her Fetters? Natural Equality in the Work of the Russian Sentimentalist Woman Writer Mariia Bolotnikova'. *Aspasia. International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 2, 2008, pp. 1–27.

<sup>11</sup> [Anon.]: 'O novoi Eloize: Pis'mo rossiianki'. *Vestnik Evropy* 9, 1814, p. 36–47.

evangel of womanhood' was required if society was to be changed for the better. She calls this the 'sentimentalization' of public language, stating that 'sentimentalization bore with it a tendency toward a sometimes censorious moralism, the voice of strained piety'.<sup>12</sup> Elevating woman's symbolic standing, the feminisation inherent in Sentimentalist culture offered women writers the chance to acquire positions of social recognition within its essentialist foundations. It is, however, precisely this identification of the woman poet with ideals of virtue and morals which renders many of their literary works difficult to appreciate due to their excessive moralising.

All the same, women writers did make use of their alleged innate goodness to justify their activity as writers. Sentimentalism's affiliation with enthusiastic religiosity, reinforced by the emergence in Russia of pietists and Protestant sects, gave women a voice to express their spirituality and to assume an authorial role. By identifying with the stereotypes which represented them as idealised, angelic, transcendental, and passionless, women writers acquired writerly authority, especially when they translated works of a religious nature. Lotman observes that 'secular poets undertaking versions of psalms is evidence of their conception of themselves as voices with quasi-religious authority'.<sup>13</sup> Women writers further conformed to Sentimentalist ideals of modesty when combining translated and original texts in their works.

The poet Anna Turchaninova's work, for example, is an expression of her religious conviction. It contains poems in which she discloses that God's image comes to life in her heart when she is praying, and that paradise blossoms in her soul during these moments. Longing for the hereafter, she asks God to illuminate her mind and heart. She is a writer who has adopted the Sentimentalist image of female virtue and piety for her own ends. Similarly, as Greene's study suggests, Praskov'ia Bakunina (1810–1880) wrote works of a more religious nature for publication, whereas her unpublished works include poems which refer to folk literature, thereby conforming less to social expectations of women.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain: *Public Man, Private Woman. Women in Social and Political Thought*. Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ 1993, pp. 231–233.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Wendy Rosslyn: 'Making their Way into Print. Poems by Eighteenth-Century Russian Women'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, 2000, pp. 407–438 (p. 436).

<sup>14</sup> Anna Turchaninova: 'Glas smernago k Bogu'. In: Russian National Library, Russkii rukopisnyi fond, Fond Derzhavina № 43, XXV, pp. 101–107 (fol. 4). On Turchaninova's predilection for Graveyard poetry in the style of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, see Ewington, pp. 361–365; Diana Greene: 'Praskovia Bakunina and the Poetess' Dilemma'. In: Fainshtein, Mikhail (ed.): *Russkie*



### Women's justifications for their activities as writers

Women also made use of Sentimentalist discourse by endorsing the image of the poet as an interpreter of Creation, and referring to the idea that the production of literature was a spontaneous act, as outlined, for instance, in Karamzin's 'A Walk'. Since nature was regarded as a repository and outflow of divine providence, and the poet as its immediate interpreter, women — thought to be closer to nature than culture — benefitted from this concept when demonstrating their suitability for the profession as a writer.

The English poet Isabella Lickbarrow (1784–1847), who published her *Poetical Effusions* in 1814, likes to refer to the 'heart whose feelings overflow', and defines the creative process as an experience of which she expects that 'harmonious language, rich and strong, / Should in *spontaneous* numbers flow' (my emphasis).<sup>15</sup> The conception of literary creation as a spontaneous act rather than time-consuming labour, and women's view of this paradigm, reappeared in the course of Russian literary history from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In my Conclusion, I will address the different ways in which various women authors including Anna Bunina, Evdokiia Rostopchina, Karolina Pavlova, Anna Akhmatova and Nadezhda L'vova expressed themselves on this topic.

The idea that literature is created in a spontaneous act was also central to the myth of the Romantic poet, which peaked between 1820 and 1840, a time when Sentimentalist ideals were in decline. There are, however, fundamental differences between Sentimentalist and Romantic myths of poetic creation, both in terms of poetic sources of inspiration and the conception of the poet. While Sentimentalism perceives nature as harmonious and idyllic, prompting poetic raptures, the Romantic view tends to focus on the violence of the elements as inspirations of poetic illumination. The Byronic hero receives his mission as a prophet for humanity in an

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*pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII—pervoi treti XX vv.* Sbornik nauchnykh statei. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1995, pp. 43–57 (pp. 44, 51–52).

Iu.V. Zhukova observes something similar with regard to Anna Bunina's albums and her published works: in the former, Bunina expresses herself far more openly about women's role in society than in the latter, see

Iu.V. Zhukova, "Zhenskaia tema" na stranitsakh zhurnala "Aglaia" (1808–1812 gg.) kn. P.I. Shalikova'. In: Ganelin. R. (ed.): *O blagorodstve i preimushchestve zhenskogo pola. Iz istorii zhenskogo voprosa v Rossii*. Sankt-Peterburgskaia gosudarstvennaia akademiia kul'tury: St Petersburg 1997, pp. 38–50 (pp. 44–45).

<sup>15</sup> Isabella Lickbarrow: 'On the Difficulty of Attaining Poetic Excellence'. In: *Poetical Effusions*.

Branthwaite: Kendal 1814; repr. Woodstock Books: Oxford 1994, pp. 22–24 (p. 23).

Ossianic landscape dominated by raging oceans, steep cliffs and eagles' eyries on mountain peaks way out of reach. Romanticism places inspiration in the hands of an elemental divine force which cannot possibly be described as female, thereby perpetuating metaphorical patriarchal authority. Inspiration in Romanticism symbolises God's direct wish for man to fulfil the prophetic mission for which he has been chosen. The concept of nature as a female intermediary between the poet and the male divine will has been obliterated.<sup>16</sup>

A collection of poems, ostensibly by one Anna Smirnova, published in 1837, illustrates the fact that women found it easier to adopt the Sentimentalist conception of the poet as interpreter of Creation. Perhaps the author of this work is not, as the name suggests, a woman, but a man making fun of women's incursion into the field of authorship in the Romantic era. Whatever the case may be, the collection reflects the unease created by the presence of women and the literary presentation of the poet in Romanticism. In these poems, the female lyrical persona assumes imagery commonly associated with the Byronic poet. Appalled by her daring, one reviewer criticised the endeavour as highly unbefitting a woman, exhorting her to address more feminine subjects, such as the world of feelings. To another reviewer, the combination of elevated and sublime metaphors with ideals of female etiquette was so disturbing that he assumed the author to be a man, and the poems a parody of the female endeavour to conquer Parnassus. He may have been correct in his assumption, which was perhaps due to the excessively self-confident introductory statement made by the (woman?) poet announcing that further works would be published 'odin za drugim' (one after the other). The syntax in these poems is clumsy and overly complex; a great number of foreign words occur to flaunt erudition.

None of these features were particularly appropriate as evidence of the female modesty and naturalness expected of women authors. The clearest support of a suspicion that the poems are a satire on women's incursion in the field of literature comes from two lines in one of the poems quoted by the reviewer. They ridicule female authors wishing to emulate the Byronic hero by replacing the image of wild goats for the turtle dove: 'Не горлинка летит дарить вентцом первенство, / Но

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<sup>16</sup> On how Russian women authors responded to traditional male metaphors for writing, see also Irina Savkina: 'Mozhet li zhenshchina byt' romanticheskim poetom?' In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 97–111.

козы дикия хотят воспеть геройство' (The turtle dove does not fly to crown the winner, / But wild goats desire to glorify heroics).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, as Greene has pointed out, critics heaped scorn on female poets who adopted a 'visionary, prophetic stance', including Ekaterina Shakhovskaia (d.1848) and Alexandra Zrazhevskiaia (1805–1867), who were expected to choose topics associated with calmness.<sup>18</sup>

Women further justified their activities as authors by referring to themselves as 'muses'. Bunina calls her collections of poems *Neopytnaia Muza* (The Inexperienced Muse), and Pospelova was dubbed the 'Muse of the Kliaz'm River', a title which may have inspired Naumova to call her own work *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov* (The Solitary Muse from the Kama Shores). To use the term 'muse' as a synonym for 'woman poet' was a way of establishing the identity of a woman actively engaged in the field of literature. However, the title of the 'muse' also had connotations of irrationality and non-conformity as revealed in texts by male poets in which they apologise for their muse, a symbol of their creative ability, who is lazy, capricious, fickle, unwilling or incapable of producing the artistic work expected from them by the public. Man did not consider *himself* to be unable to correspond to societal norms. If he did, the blame was firmly laid on a female entity. In the poetological work by French writer Nicolas Boileau, who regained popularity when neo-Classicism emerged in Russia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the female muse often embodies some kind of transgression. In his *L'Art poétique* (The Art of Poetry, 1674), for example, he praises the French author François de Malherbe for 'reducing the muse to the rules of duty'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Smirnova: *Sobranie razlichnykh stikhotvorenii*. Tipografiia Vingebera: St Petersburg 1837; [Anon.]: 'Sobranie razlichnykh stikhotvorenii. Sochinenie Anny Smirnovoi. Opyt v stikhakh piatnadtsatiletnei devitsy Elisavety Shakhovoi. Lina Arfa'. In: *Literaturnoe pribavlenie k russkomu invalidu na 1838 god*. Tipografiia Pliushara: St Petersburg 1838, pp. 9–11; [Anon.]: 'Sobranie razlichnykh stikhotvorenii. Sochinenie Anny Smirnovoi'. *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 25, 1837, pp. 48–50; Greene 1995, p. 44, 51–52.

<sup>19</sup> Germaine Greer : *Slip-Shod Sibyls. Recognition, Rejection and the Woman Poet*. Viking: London 1995, p. 5;

'Et réduisit la muse aux règles du devoir'. Nicholas Boileau: *Satires, Épitres, Art poétique*. Collinet, Jean-Pierre (ed.). Gallimard: Paris 1985, pp. 227–258 (p. 230).

A similar attitude is reflected in Soames' English translation in the lyrical persona's reference to one author's 'haughty Muse' who despises others but whose downfall is eventually caused by her critics: 'and dash'd the hopes of his aspiring Muse.', see

Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux: *The Art of Poetry*. Soames, Wiliam (transl.). Bentley and Magnés: London 1683, p. 8.

On the topos of the muse in Russian 18<sup>th</sup>-century women's writing, see also Sandra Shaw Bennett: "'Parnassian Sisters" of Derzhavin's Acquaintance. Some Observations on Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: Salvo, Maria Di / Hughes, Lindsey (eds): *A Window*

The early-19<sup>th</sup>-century woman poet adopted this element of irrationality when claiming for herself the status of an author. With her incursion into the male-dominated world of authorship she committed an act akin to the muse's non-conformity and irrationality. Bunina apologises for the 'unruliness of the muses' when daring to publish a poem without taking into account the corrections suggested by her male mentors. 'Возложу ли вину на строптивость муз?' (Shall I lay blame on the stubbornness of the muses?), she asks.<sup>20</sup> Her use of the metaphor of the obstinate or unruly muse as a symbol for the gift of writing poetry here conveys the idea that she was unable or unwilling to control her creativity, her writing, for which she could not be held responsible even if it challenged the male literary establishment's expectations of female subordination. In addition to this subliminal association of the muse with social non-conformity, calling oneself a muse signalled a partial adherence to the image of the muse as an idealised female being who inspires others. This allowed women writers to avoid being perceived as aberrations of nature, which they were often thought to be.

Women poets employed different ways of coping with the traditional conceptions of muse and poet. The male artist traditionally receives inspiration for his creative work from a female character; his muse is often a passive and depersonalised source of inspiration. In order to reproduce the idea of male poet and female muse, some women poets performed a gender shift, an inversion of the narrator's voice and biological sex. This had the disadvantage, however, that female characters tended to be mute. Before the 1840s, it was uncommon for women to reverse the gender configuration to celebrate man as the source of inspiration for their poems. If and when it did occur, it was regarded as inappropriate: a reviewer accused the poet Taisa Sokolova of loose morals on the grounds that her poem presented an idealised image of her husband.<sup>21</sup>

In her quest to reinvent female literary characters, a Sentimentalist woman author such as Naumova conceptualised the muse as a character of authority who exerts a masculine, penetrative, phallic power over the rather effeminate poet. This

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on Russia. *Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*. Gargnano 1994. La Fenice: Rome 1996, pp. 249–256 (p. 251).

<sup>20</sup> Anna Bunina: *Neopytnaia muza Anny Buninoi. Chast' vtoraiia*. Morskaiia tipografiia: St Petersburg 1812. 'Padenie Faetona', pp. 80–142 (p. 81). Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>21</sup> 'Stikhotvoreniia Taisy Sokolovoi'. *Otechestvennyiia zapiski na 1841 god* 17, 1842, pp. 56–57; Greer, p. 4.

was a complete inversion of conventional power relations between poet and muse. Rather than being merely the embodiment of beauty which the artist desires to capture in his work, the muse commands great respect.

### **Sappho — a literary model**

Another female literary character associated with women writers was Sappho, the Greek lyrical poet (c.630/612 BCE–c.570 BCE). Although, or perhaps precisely because, details of her life are sketchy and contested, she exerted a powerful influence throughout European culture. Since the Renaissance, Western European literature has made frequent reference to the myth of Sappho's passionate love for Phaon. References to her suicide, in particular, may well manifest a patriarchal culture which seeks to push the woman author from the heights of her fame into a sea of oblivion. Russian Sentimentalism is no exception here, as I will demonstrate shortly.

The first translation of an ode by Sappho, Sumarokov's 'Gimn Afrodite' (Hymn to Aphrodite), was printed in 1758. Evgenii Sviiasov's study shows that Sappho became an important literary model for Russian poets in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Also, as Diana Burgin observes, Sappho was en vogue in Russian literary journals in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>22</sup> In the course of two centuries, then, Sappho became an eminent literary model; more Russian works were dedicated to her than to any other writer from antiquity. From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the name of Sappho was synonymously applied to an increasing number of women poets. Sumarokov, for example, called Elizaveta Kheraskova (1767–1852) 'a new Sappho'. It was not long, however, before the name of Sappho designating 'woman poet' began to carry ironic overtones, a tendency which intensified in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century, when Konstantin Batiushkov wrote a sarcastic madrigal which refers to the myth of Sappho's suicide and was most probably aimed at Bunina, who was called a 'Russian Sappho':

Ты Сафо, я Фаон; об этом я не спорю:  
Но, к моему ты горю,

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<sup>22</sup> Diana Burgin: 'The Deconstruction of Sappho Stolz. Some Russian Abuses and Uses of the Tenth Muse'. In: Chester, Pamela / Forrester, Sibelan (eds): *Engendering Slavic Literatures*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 13–30 (p. 15).

Пути не знаешь к морю.<sup>23</sup>

*You are Sappho, I am Phaon; I will not argue this:*

*But, to my sadness, you*

*Don't know the way to the sea.*<sup>24</sup>

Batiushkov's madrigal requires the woman poet to disappear from the male-dominated context of literature by killing herself like her mythical precursor. Another Russian poet to elaborate on this myth is Vasilii Kapnist (1758–1823). In a prefatory note to his poem, 'Stikhi na izobrazhenie Safy' (Poems in Imitation of Sappho), published in 1815, Kapnist explains that in antiquity a bee was often painted next to the lyre to symbolise the instrument's sweet music. He links the image to Sappho's poetry:

С розы собранны, с тимьяна,  
Сладок, пчелка! Нам твой мед:  
Сафо, миртой увенчанна,  
Слаще о любви поет.  
Мило нам твое жужжанье,  
Как с весной летишь ты в луг:  
Мирных струн ея бряцанье  
Нежит более наш слух.  
Грации ужались руку  
В греве свойственно тебе:  
Сафо стрел любовных муку  
Ощущала лишь в себе.  
Часто, лакомством манима,

<sup>23</sup> Evgenii Sviasov: 'Safo i "zhenskaia poeziia" kontsa XVIII—nachala XIX vekov'. In: Fainshtein, Mikhail (ed.): *Russkie pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII—pervoi treti XX vv.*, Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1995, pp. 11–28 (pp. 11–15).

On this topic, see also

Frank Göpfert: 'Russische Dichterinnen des 18. Jahrhunderts im Selbst- und Fremdverständnis klassizistischer Dichtung. Elizaveta Cheraskova und Ekaterina Urusova'. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 21–40.

<sup>24</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

В сладких тонешь ты сотах.  
 Сафо, ревностью гонима,  
 В ярых погреблась волнах.<sup>25</sup>

*Gathered from roses and from thyme,  
 Your honey, bee, is sweet for us:  
 Sappho, crowned with myrtle, sings  
 A sweeter song of love.  
 Your buzzing, too, is sweet to us,  
 When in the spring you fly to the meadow:  
 the strumming of her peaceful strings  
 Is more tender to our ear.  
 Graces have stung the hand  
 In sorrow typical for you:  
 The pain of Sappho's arrows of love  
 You felt only within yourself.  
 Often, drawn by a sugary treat,  
 You drown in the sweet cells of the comb.  
 Sappho, pursued by jealousy,  
 Rowed into the wild waves.<sup>26</sup>*

Here, Sentimentalism's association of woman with nature manifests itself in the comparison of the woman poet to a bee. It is a trivialising image, however flattering the allegory may have been intended to be. Once he has celebrated the sweetness of the poetess' songs, Kapnist follows the same path as many of his colleagues and lets her perish in the sea.

The subliminal message conveyed by these poems to women authors was that the only way for a woman to overcome sadness was to die. Sappho's gift for writing is not reason enough for her to stay alive, and, unlike Arion's, her lyre does not save her from drowning. According to the ancient legend, bandits pushed Arion, the bard, from their ship into the sea; Arion only survived because he was able to hold on to his lyre

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<sup>25</sup> Vasilii Kapnist: 'Stikhi na izobrazhenie Safy'. *Trudy kazanskago obshchestva liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti* 1, 1815, pp. 224–245.

<sup>26</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

which floated on the water until a dolphin took him back to the mainland. Rosslyn demonstrates how Bunina took up Arion's myth in her 1809 collection of poems, at the beginning of which she used it as visual motif, to which she added the words, 'The lyre saved me from sinking' (лира спасла меня от потопления).<sup>27</sup>

Due to the association of Sappho with self-destruction, some women writers of the time may have been reluctant to adopt her as a model for their writing. The irony and sarcasm heaped on the Greek poet by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century may be another reason why women writers such as Bunina or Naumova disliked being called a 'Russian Sappho'. Naumova does, however, make an oblique reference to Sappho's suicide when her lyrical persona declares that she will not follow the ancient model.

Another reference to Sappho can be found in Bunina's *Inexperienced Muse*, as Rosslyn's study demonstrates. Bunina challenges tradition by presenting Sappho's expression of passion not as emotional abandon, but as the lyrical persona's artistic reflection. As Greene has shown, a further example of the use of Sappho in Russian women's poetry can be found in a poem by Kul'man which, rather than her alleged suicide, 'emphasises Sappho's glory and great stature as a poet'.<sup>28</sup>

Self-abandon was not necessarily the end of the woman poet, but could serve as an occasion for self-reflection and a source of new creative power. In their article on Karolina Pavlova, Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles show that she was inspired by the memory of her attachment to the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz after their relationship ended due to his not having the means to marry her. The two scholars argue that

... from Pavlova's reflections on their relationship came a way of defining rather than destroying, Sappho-like, her poetic identity and poetic voice. [...] Separation generated some of her most interesting poems about the self, and about the thinking self in particular, in part because she embraced the paradoxical dimensions of a topic that threatened the self with destruction but also liberated the poetic voice to speak.

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<sup>27</sup> Wendy Rosslyn: *Anna Bunina (1774–1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry in Russia*. Mellen: Lewiston 1997, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> Rosslyn 1993, pp. 147–153;  
Greene 1994, p. 99.



Joan DeJean also shows that women authors often rewrote the myth of Sappho's death. As Sandler and Vowles argue, 'in these revisions, abandonment has meant not the end of the woman poet, but her beginning'. These examples support the thesis of the feminist scholar Alicia Ostriker, who argues that female poets often try to rewrite patriarchal myths in order to adapt them to the experiences of women.<sup>29</sup>

The conflict between the male-dominated interpretation of the myth of Sappho's death and women's corrective efforts continued to feature in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literature. In this context, Sviasov mentions Mirra Lokhvitskaia (1869/1870–1905), approvingly designated 'Sappho', i.e. woman poet, in contrast to the disparaging early-19<sup>th</sup>-century use of the name. However, her poem, 'Sopernitse' (To a Female Rival, 1896–1898), which conveys the lyrical persona's impressions as she contemplates the sea, is scathingly reviewed by one literary critic for deviating from the classical legend. He reminds her of Sappho's fate, which he implicitly encourages her to follow:

Пусть г-жа Лохвицкая вспомнит хотя бы классический пример Сафо.  
На что даровитая поэтесса, а звоном струны не пленила Фаона и  
бросилась в море с отчаяния.<sup>30</sup>

*Let Mme Lokhvitskaia recall at least the classical example of Sappho.  
However talented the poetess was, she failed to entrap Phaon with the  
sound of her strings and threw herself into the sea in despair.*<sup>31</sup>

This shows the strong association of Sappho's model with self-destruction, and the criticism encountered by women writers wanting to revise the literary pattern.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephanie Sandler / Judith Vowles: 'Abandoned Meditation. Karolina Pavlova's Early Poetry'. In: Fusso, Susanne / Lehrmann, Alexander (eds): *Essays on Karolina Pavlova*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston IL 2001, pp. 32–52 (pp. 33–34);

Joan DeJean: *Fictions of Sappho. 1546–1937*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1989.

Alicia Ostriker: 'The Thieves of Language. Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking'. In: Showalter, Elaine (ed.): *The New Feminist Criticism. Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. Pantheon: New York 1985, pp. 314–338.

<sup>30</sup> Sviasov, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

### Revisions of pastoral gender patterns

The common pastoral gender pattern reduces women to mute objects of male adoration, symbols of harmony with Creation. Some Sentimentalist women writers challenged this pattern. In Bunina's poem, 'Liviia: Idillia' (Livia: An Idyll), published in her 1809 collection, for instance, a shepherdess complains about unrequited love.<sup>32</sup> The female protagonist appears in a setting reminiscent of the *locus terribilis*, i.e. of the emotional hell traditionally experienced by the disappointed shepherd. Unusually for a Sentimentalist shepherdess, Livia is not sitting by a refreshing little brook or in a shady grove. Instead, on a hot summer's day, she sits bareheaded in a desert of sand and stones, busily smashing a rock to pieces. She is lovesick, an emotional state the pastoral usually only grants to men, expressing her distress in elegiac speeches. This transforms the man she loves into the object of the love plot, a remote creature without a voice of his own, who provides an opportunity for the female persona to articulate her concerns. Bunina has inverted the traditional functions the pastoral ascribes to men and women.

In her poem 'Maiskaia progulka boliashchei' (The Sick Woman's Maytime Stroll), Bunina uses the pastoral's contrasting images of the *locus amoenus* and the *locus terribilis*, also combining the latter with metaphors whose origins lay in Petrarchan love lyrics. Her female lyrical persona bears the features of the *locus terribilis* as she goes for a stroll one beautiful day in May, the month of lovers. Contrary to what might be expected of a female persona in Sentimentalist culture, she cannot find happiness in the idyllic setting in which nature is flourishing. Rather, the beauty of the *locus amoenus* around her creates a painful contrast to her own suffering. She lives in a *locus terribilis* described in apocalyptic images: hell is lodged in her soul; a volcano scorches her parched breast; a greedy serpent writhes about her heart, sucking her seething blood. The lovely May setting contrasts so sharply with her own feelings that she firmly dissociates herself from Creation, exclaiming that she is no daughter of this nature. The woman in this poem is sick; what she is suffering from, the poem does not reveal.

Nevertheless, in the neo-Classicist tradition which inspires many of Bunina's poems, a person who feels ill in the face of spring's beauty can only be lovesick. Bunina's narrator therefore occupies a hitherto exclusively male position in the

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<sup>32</sup> Anna Bunina: *Neopytnaia muza*. Tipografiia Shnora: St Petersburg 1809. 'Liviia: Idillia', pp. 7–9.

pastoral, i.e. to voice and describe passion, even if surreptitiously so. Apart from challenging the pastoral's gender pattern, the poem may also be an allusion to Bunina's grave illness due to breast cancer.<sup>33</sup>

Another female poet who found a subtle way of applying pastoral imagery to the situation of a woman is Alexandra Khvostova. In her prose poem, 'Ruchee' (The Brooklet), she creates a contrast between a *locus amoenus*, i.e. nature in bloom, and the female lyrical persona's bleak state of mind. As with Bunina, the divergence from the gender pattern of the pastoral is intriguing. Rather than a man grieving the absence of his beloved shepherdess, the poem presents a daughter lamenting the death of her father. The female narrator is sitting beside a brook, a standard component of a *locus amoenus*. The merry babbling of its waters contrasts vividly with the narrator's lifelessness and grief which runs through her veins like a deathly chill:

Жизнь течет в жилах моих, но в них нет жизни; смерть давно уже  
гнездится в томном сердце моем....<sup>34</sup>

*Life flows in my veins, but there is no liveliness in them; death has long  
already settled in my heavy heart...*<sup>35</sup>

Here, the narrator's bleak state of mind is not associated with Petrarchan imagery, whose passionate intensity would be inappropriate in a father–daughter relationship. Rather, the mental *locus terribilis* manifests itself in a fascination with the afterlife akin to that of Gothic literature: the daughter utters her wish to remain at her father's grave until death comes to claim her, too. Without making use of their imagery, the daughter's longing for death alludes to Petrarchan love lyrics where the only point in the lover's life is to be with his beloved. If this cannot be, he has lost any reason to live. Khvostova reproduces these ideals, adapting them, however, to a father–daughter relationship, which was considered more fitting for a Sentimentalist woman writer than passionate descriptions of emotional distress about the loss of a male lover.

<sup>33</sup> Bunina 1812, 'Mayskaia progulka boliashchei', pp. 30–33.

<sup>34</sup> Aleksandra Khvostova: *Otryvki*. Tipografiia gosudarstvennoi meditsinskoi kollegii: St Petersburg 1797. 'Ruchee', pp. 31–48 (p. 34).

<sup>35</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

In one of her elegiac poems, Elizaveta Dolgorukova (1766–18??) uses the Sentimentalist topos of friendship with a similar aim as her female narrator expresses her grief over the death of her sister. Even though the narrator is not in a pastoral setting, her death wish uses similar imagery to evoke the traditional male lover's complaint about being separated from his beloved.<sup>36</sup>

Another example of a woman poet inverting the pastoral's traditional gender roles is the 1799 poem by Anna Sergeevna Zhukova (?–1799), 'Suprugu moemu, s kotorym ia v razluke' (To My Husband, from Whom I am Separated).<sup>37</sup> It expresses a wife's sadness at her husband's absence of several years. In allusions typical to the pastoral, the lyrical persona describes autumn and approaching winter; rivers are frozen, the natural environment reflects her bleak state of mind. There is no association of spring with women in this poem; the author gives her narrator free rein to voice her grief.

Yet another woman author to employ the topos of grief about personal loss in her poetry was Zhukova's sister, Elizaveta Neelova (dates unknown). While the setting of 'Elegiia na smert' supruga i bolezni sestry' (Elegy on the Death of my Husband and on my Sister's Illness, 1799) is not a pastoral, the lyrical persona clearly expresses her death wish.<sup>38</sup>

The English poet Charlotte Smith (1749–1806) provides an example of a narrator expressing emotional grief without overstepping the marks of female modesty and decency. 'Spring', published in 1789 as a part of her *Elegiac Sonnets*, does not reveal her narrator's sex. Nevertheless, Smith's intended readership was likely to associate the female author with the lyrical persona. Contrary to the Sentimentalist conception of women, she experiences idyllic spring-time nature as a painful contrast to her own emotional world:

### **To Spring**

Again the wood, and long with-drawing vale,  
In many a tint of tender green are drest,  
Where the young leaves unfolding, scarce conceal  
Beneath their early shade, the half-form'd nest

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<sup>36</sup> Ewington, pp. 367–379.

<sup>37</sup> Ewington, pp. 381–389.

<sup>38</sup> Ewington, pp. 391–401.

Of finch or wood-lark; and the primrose pale,  
 And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round,  
 Give their sweet spirits to the sighing gale.  
 Ah! Season of delight! — could aught be found  
 To soothe awhile the tortur'd bosom's pain,  
 Of Sorrow's rankling shaft to cure the wound,  
 And bring life's first delusions once again,  
 'Twere surely met in thee! — thy prospect fair,  
 Thy sounds of harmony, thy balmy air,  
 Have power to cure all sadness — but despair.<sup>39</sup>

What renders this (woman's) lyrical complaint acceptable is the fact that Smith does not dwell on depictions of the mental *locus terribilis*, alluding merely to her narrator's emotional pain.

Rather than revise traditional representations of female characters, some women writers chose alternative poetic metaphors to broach topics deemed appropriate. The brook, part of the idyllic landscape which Sentimentalism associated with women, was one such metaphor used by female authors wishing to reflect on the inconsistency of friendship and on the transitoriness of all earthly things. Male writers occasionally associated life's ephemeral nature with regrets about the transitoriness of woman's beauty, and with Anacreons call to *carpe diem*, 'seize the day'. The topic of love was a delicate one for women writers, which is why they often preferred to write contemplative idylls that avoided the subject.

In her 1688 poem, 'Le ruisseau' (The Brook), French author Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde Deshoulières (c.1638–1694) provided an important model for the metaphor of the brook as a means for women to ponder life's fleeting nature. A celebrated poet, Deshoulières spent most of her life in Paris. Her poetic reflections on the human condition express regret about humanity's loss of innocence in the emergence of civilisation. Simple contemplations of natural phenomena such as a

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<sup>39</sup> Charlotte Smith: In: *Elegiac Sonnets*. Cadell: London 1789; repr. Woodstock Books: Oxford 1992. 'To Spring', p. 8.

brook or a flock of sheep remind the narrator of Creation's unsullied, admirable naivety, making her feel humankind's present corrupted state the more acutely.<sup>40</sup>

Deshoulières' work began to be known in Russia from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, with several translations of her poems appearing in subsequent years. Among her translators was Ippolit Bogdanovich (1743–1803), the author of the poem 'Dushen'ka'. His translation of Deshoulières' 'The Brook' appeared in 1761, in a version which largely omitted the poetess' accusation of male arrogance and belief to be entitled to rule over nature. However, as Joachim Klein argues in his seminal study on 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literature, Bogdanovich deviates from the French original by introducing calls for social equality. Further translations of Deshoulières' idylls appeared in the journal *Vechera* (The Evenings) in 1772. As Rosslyn suggests, the one by Mariia Sushkova (1752–1803) is much closer to the original than Bogdanovich, preserving Deshoulières' criticism of man's aspirations to power. Frank Göpfert observes that Deshoulières' 'The Brook' initiated a surge of Sentimentalist imitations. Even as late as 1807, Alexei Merzliakov published a collection of her works under the title *Idillii gospozhi Dezul'er* (Mme Deshoulières' Idylls), proof of her continuing popularity.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde Deshoulières: *Poésies de Mme Deshoulières. Nouvelle édition augmentée de plusieurs ouvrages*. [n.pub.]: Bruxelles 1740. 'Le ruisseau', pp. 128–132; Alain Niderst: 'Deshoulières, Antoinette'. In: Beaumarchais, Jean-Pierre de et al. (eds): *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*. Bordas: Paris 1994, p. 668; [Anon.]: 'Des Houlières, Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde'. In France, Peter (ed.): *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*. Clarendon Press: Oxford 1995, p. 234.

<sup>41</sup> Dezul'er, Antuanetta: *Idillii gospozhi Dezul'er*: Alexei Merzliakov (transl.). Tipografiia Platona Beketova: Moscow 1807; Joachim Klein: *Die Schäferdichtung des russischen Klassizismus*. Harrasowitz: Berlin 1988, pp. 45–46; M. Koreneva: 'Poezii. Glava III'. In: Levin, Jurii (ed.): *Schöne Literatur in russischer Übersetzung. Von den Anfängen bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. (2 vols). Böhlau: Köln 1996, Vol II, pp. 122–139 (p. 133); Frank Göpfert: 'Observations on the Life and Work of Elizaveta Kheraskova (1737–1809)'. In: *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*, pp. 163–86 (p. 171); loakhim Klein: *Puti kul'turnogo importa. Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka. Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury*: Moscow 2005, pp. 56–71.

Klein here also refers to Mikhail Kheraskov's translations of Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset's (1709–1777) idyll inspired by Deshoulières's meditative idylls, 'Le siècle pastoral' (The pastoral age, 1734). The importance of works by Deshoulières and her daughter Thérèse for Russian literature also clearly emerges from Reinhard Lauer's study on 18<sup>th</sup>-century poetic forms, Reinhard Lauer: *Gedichtform zwischen Schema und Verfall. Sonett, Rondeau, Madrigal, Ballade, Stanze und Triolett in der russischen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Fink: München 1975, pp. 91, 206, 254, 258, 259; Wendy Rosslyn: 'Mar'ya Vasil'evna Sushkova. An Enlightened Woman of the Eighteenth Century'. In: Smith, Gerald et al. (eds): *Oxford Slavonic Papers*. Clarendon Press: Oxford 2000, pp. 85–107 (pp. 93–95); Frank Göpfert: *Russische Autorinnen von der Mitte bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Teil 1. 1750–1780*, Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2007, p. 296.

Scholars such as M. Koreneva have argued that Deshoulières' contemplative idylls were largely 'unproductive' in Russia's literature of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which marks the emergence of the Russian love idyll. Nevertheless, a considerable number of Russian women writers at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries emulated Deshoulières' meditative idylls, elaborating on the topos of the brook with its idyllic, feminine connotations, as a symbol of the inconsistency of both life and romantic love, a topic not addressed by the French woman poet. 'Ruchei' (The Brook, 1796), a poem by Ekaterina Urusova (1747–after 1816), quite clearly refers to Deshoulières' idyll insofar as Urusova's narrator expresses her wish to lead the kind of calm, dispassionate, contemplative life exemplified by the clear waters of the brook. Three years later, alluding to her 1796 poem, Urusova published another poetic work featuring a brook.<sup>42</sup> In the same year, Khvostova published her prose poem, 'Rucheek' (The Brooklet). This turned out to be probably the most popular of the works inspired by Deshoulières' idyll.<sup>43</sup>

It is likely that Pospelova was also inspired by these women authors given that in 1801 she published a prose poem entitled 'Rucheek' (The Brooklet), itself a reflection on the ephemeral quality of life and harmful human passions. In 1807 Volkova based her poem, 'The Brooklet', on Khvostova's prose text. A footnote refers to Khvostova as the author of the original Russian work; Volkova noted that it had made a lasting impression on her when in a similar frame of mind, and she requests Khvostova's permission to re-create her prose text as a poem.

Bolotnikova's poem 'Vospominanie' (Memory) also features the topos of the brook, even if the tone is elegiac rather than contemplative. Here, the lyrical persona asks the brook to carry her thoughts to her beloved.<sup>44</sup>

### Summary and Outlook

Chapter Three has explored ways in which Russian women writers responded to Sentimentalist gender concepts, which can be summarised as follows: in their choice of topics these writers were expected to conform to requirements of decency, virtue, and modesty, and to write in a Sentimental style which did not betray their

<sup>42</sup> Ekaterina Urusova: 'Ot sochinitel'nitsy "Ruch'ia" otvet na otvet'. *Ippokrena* 71, 1799, pp. 303–304.

<sup>43</sup> By 1844, having appeared as *Fragments* (Otryvki) together with another prose poem, 'The Fireplace' (Kamin), Khvostova's 'The Brooklet' had been reprinted four times.

<sup>44</sup> When the speaker notices that the brook disappears into an abyss, however, she entrusts her thoughts to the winds.

intellectual abilities. Rather than striving to become professional writers, they were confined to dilettantism; each publication required a mentor's approval. Women who wished to be recognised as authors had to find ways to justify their activity, for instance, by appearing to adopt the Sentimentalist notion that women bore greater affinity to nature than culture.

Sometimes they presented themselves as fervently religious in order to acquire symbolic authority. They named their poetic personae after a muse, who is traditionally the source of inspiration rather than the actual creator of a literary work. Any attempts to reverse traditional gender connotations of male author and female muse were unwelcome. Sappho, the female poet from ancient Greece, provided women writers with a role model, but only until her name came to be negatively connoted. Inspired by Sappho's poems, women writers did try to revise the literary model of the female poet who has to commit suicide when the person she loves abandons her.

Potential conflicts with requirements of decency made love a delicate topic for women to address. They therefore sometimes disguised it by using the pastoral imagery of the *locus amoenus* and the *locus terribilis*, and occasionally adding Gothic images. The motivation for a protagonist's death wish shifts from the traditional topos of the heart-sick, rejected male lover to physical illness or grief about the loss of a friend or family member. Eventually, emulating French author Mme Deshoulières, women writers responded to Sentimentalist gender conventions by adhering to the idea of women's affinity with nature and choosing the topos of philosophical reflections on the inconstancy of human life, inspired by the observation of a brook, one of the main features of a Sentimentalist idyllic landscape.

In this chapter I have also outlined some of the literary conventions that reigned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and presented some of the ways in which writers of either sex approached them.

Each of the three women authors who stand at the centre of this study responded differently to these literary conventions. Pospelova's work, written at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, includes idylls, panegyric and religious odes, pastorals, and moral reflections, mainly to celebrate a male-dominated earthly paradise in which women symbolise harmony. Bolotnikova, by contrast, questions and challenges many of the values reproduced in Pospelova's work. Written more than



fifteen years after Pospelova's writings, Bolotnikova's mirror the more politically active climate of her day in poems which feature reflections on the notion of equality.

Naumova is the most innovative, varied, and controversial author of the three. Her work ranges from a revision of gender roles in pastorals to depictions of salon culture and divination rituals, to deconstructions of the role of women in Sentimentalist idylls. She rewrites many patriarchal myths, including the notion that women are unable to conquer emotional distress. Her representation of Fate is associated with a call on individuals to act upon reasonable reflection and within their boundaries. By including confident female characters, Naumova revises aspects of Sentimentalist discourse, which largely regard women as naive and vulnerable creatures.

## Chapter Four

### The Woman Writer as Interpreter of Creation: Mariia Pospelova

This chapter explores the possibilities Sentimentalist discourse could offer to a woman writer interested in exploiting religion and virtue for her self-image as an author. My examination suggests that Mariia Pospelova (1780, 1783, or 1784–1805) engages with the concept of nature as an earthly paradise, justifying her writerly activity by references to the equation of woman with nature, innate goodness, and virtuousness. My analysis of reviews on Pospelova will reveal that the popularity in Sentimentalist culture of woman's image as a pious virgin and innocent country maiden transferred to the perception of the author and, in Pospelova's case, to descriptions of her early death in particular. In her writings Pospelova found ways of revising the role ascribed to women in the pastoral. While the traditional pastoral instrumentalises woman as a symbol of harmony and as the mute object of male adoration, Pospelova lends a voice and authority to the female author-character by employing pastoral imagery in her philosophical and religious reflections. Hers is an example of a Sentimentalist woman author who achieved this without fundamentally challenging the Sentimentalist conceptualisation of women.

#### Pospelova's life and work

Pospelova was born at some time between 1780 and 1784, a few years before the French Revolution. The various implications of the fact that the exact year of her birth is unknown will be discussed below. She published two collections of poems and philosophical and religious reflections in the course of her short life.<sup>1</sup> Her family lived in Vladimir, the culturally thriving capital of the eponymous province, some 180 kilometres north-east of Moscow. At the time, such a distance was considered quite short and there were occasional trips to Moscow, which would take about two days.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mariia Pospelova: *Luchshie chasy zhizni moei*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Vladimir 1798; Mariia Pospelova: *Nekotorye cherty prirody i istinny, ili ottenki myslei i chuvstv moikh*. Tipografiia senata u Selivanovskago: Moscow 1801.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief description of Vladimir's role as a centre of cultural life and its connection to Moscow, see Katherine Pickering Antonova's study on a provincial gentry family during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Katherine Pickering Antonova: *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013, pp. 10–12.

Her father earned a modest income as a clerk.<sup>3</sup> The youngest of a family of ten, Mariia Pospelova had five brothers and four sisters. After their father's death, the family found themselves in financial difficulties. Nonetheless, their mother managed to place her sons in educational institutions to prepare them for state service, and to marry off her four elder daughters, while Mariia stayed by her side.

Within their modest family means, her siblings helped their youngest sister to educate herself. From a young age she was an eager pupil, teaching herself music, drawing, and French. Her earliest known literary work, a tale in verse, *Nepostoianstvo shchastia* (The Inconstancy of Happiness), was written when she was just twelve.<sup>4</sup> Her apparent interest in science reveals itself in her use of scientific terms including 'atom', 'forfor', 'planety', and 'teleskop' (atom, phosphorus, planets, telescope). Her work also displays a familiarity with the heliocentric planetary system and her interest in astronomy is reflected in notes on the theory that the sun and stars will one day be extinguished. Her collections further contain references to scientific laws such as the speed of light.<sup>5</sup>

While Mariia Pospelova was largely self-taught, she also had a mentor in Vasilii Podshivalov, the editor of a journal, *Priiatnoe i poleznoe preprovozhdenie vremeni* (Pleasant and Useful Pastime), who helped her develop her gift for writing and published a few of her poems. Most of Pospelova's poems, however, circulated in manuscript form, as was common at the time for male and female writers alike. The circulation of works by a contemporary author in a group of people with a shared interest in literature was part of salon culture and regarded as a domestic form of publishing. In 1798, with the help of F.T. Pospelov, a relative, she published a collection of poems of considerable literary and poetic skill, entitled *Lushchie chasy zhizni moei* (The Best Hours of My Life).<sup>6</sup> The title echoes a preface by Salomon Gessner, who

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Zirin: 'Pospelova, Mariia Alexeevna'. In: Zirin, Mary, and Marina Ledkovsky et al. (eds): *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*. Greenwood Press: London 1994, pp. 514–516 (p. 515).

<sup>4</sup> B. Fedorov: *O zhizni i sochineniiakh devitsy Pospelovoi*. Tipografiia Plavil'shchikova: St Petersburg 1824, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Gimn Vsemogushchemu', pp. 27–37 (pp. 29–30); 'Sumerki', pp. 51–62 (p. 53).

Pospelova 1801, 'K solntsu', pp. 116–130 (pp. 124–125); 'Razmyshlenie na novoi 1800 god', pp. 52–70 (pp. 63–64).

<sup>6</sup> M. Makarov: 'Mariia Timofeevna Pospelova'. *Damskii zhurnal* 16, 1830, pp. 34–38 (p. 34); D. Mordovtsev: *Russkiiia zhenshchiny novogo vremeni. Biograficheskie ocherki iz russkoi istorii*. Cherkosov: St Petersburg 1874, Vol III, p. 42; Zirin 1994, 'Pospelova', p. 515; Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth*

claimed that the idylls offered to the reader were the fruit of his most pleasurable hours spent in the countryside, far from the rush and depravity of city life.<sup>7</sup>

Pospelova's print publication was extraordinary in that she was not only virtually the first woman author to publish a complete collection of works but, most notably, a woman who lived in a provincial town, that of Vladimir on the Klyazma river.

Pospelova dedicated her publication to the wife of Alexander I, Elizaveta Alexeevna, whom she addresses in her preface, praising the Grand Duchess' virtue before declaring that she would be honoured if Alexeevna approved of her work.<sup>8</sup> Complying with Sentimentalist expectations, she begs forgiveness for any shortcomings in her writings, and for having included many non-panegyric poems, which constitute the majority in the collection. In her attempt to obtain the royal family's symbolic approval, Pospelova presents herself in a public light.<sup>9</sup>

The first three poems in *The Best Hours of My Life* are panegyric odes to the royal family. When Pavel I was presented with her ode dedicated to him, he rewarded Pospelova with a diamond ring. The royal attention aroused the interest of men of letters such as Gavril Derzhavin, Mikhail Kheraskov, and Nikolai Karamzin. Prince Ivan Dolgorukii called her 'the Muse of the Klyazma river'. Having read her work, a rich Muscovite proposed marriage, promising to alleviate her and her mother's financial difficulties. Pospelova rejected him, either because she had no feelings for a man many years her senior, or because her mother wanted to keep her at her side.<sup>10</sup>

A second collection of poems appeared in Moscow in 1801, entitled *Nekotorye cherty prirody i istinny, ili ottenki myslei i chuvstv moikh* (Some Traits of Nature and Truth, or Traces of My Thoughts and Feelings). Pospelova's family was living in Moscow at the time and may well have assisted her in finding a publisher. While her first collection was dedicated to a member of the royal family, *Some Traits of Nature and*

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*Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, p. 347–359.

<sup>7</sup> Salomon Gessner: *Idyllen*. Voss, Ernst (ed.). Reclam Jun.: Stuttgart 1988, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> This preface and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> On the function of dedications in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literature, see Natal'ia Kochetkova: 'K istorii odnogo literaturnogo posviashcheniia A.M. Kutuzova'. In: *Russian Literature. Special Issue. 18<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature* 52, 2002, pp. 271–281 (p. 274); on dedications in Russian women's writing, in particular regarding translations, see Wendy Rosslyn: *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness*, pp. 127–140.

<sup>10</sup> Makarov, p. 35;

M. Khmyrov: 'Russkie pisatel' nitsy proshlago vremeni. Mariia Pospelova'. *Rassvet. Zhurnal nauk, iskustv i literatury dlia vzroslykh devits* 12, 1861, pp. 257–263 (p. 260); Fedorov, p. 9.

*Truth* is dedicated to ‘dusham blagorodnym i chuvstvitel’nym’, i.e. ‘noble and sensitive souls’. In the preface Pospelova apologises for her lack of education and stresses the importance of virtue. While her first collection featured three prominently placed panegyric odes, one such ode, celebrating the accession to the throne of Alexander I, concludes her second collection. *Some Traits of Nature and Truth* opens with six translations of psalms, followed by a religious ode and a poem celebrating a military victory. By placing her psalm translations at the beginning, Pospelova may have wanted to demonstrate her conformity to the Sentimentalist conception of women as pious; it may also have been intended as an allusion to her interest in education. A further important theme in this collection is the philosophical and religious contemplation of human existence. Pastorals only appear in the second half of the collection, perhaps because they belong to a lighter genre. Finally, almost a third of Pospelova’s work consists of poems which express respect for the existing order.

In 1803 Pospelova’s family left Moscow. Her eldest sister’s husband was transferred to St Petersburg for his work. Pospelova accompanied her sister to help her settle into the new environment. During her year in St Petersburg, she attempted to entertain her sister by writing a novel entitled *Al’manzor*, written — as Amanda Ewington argues — in the spirit of François René de Chateaubriand’s *Atala*.<sup>11</sup> Pospelova also began work on *Georgii, ili otroch’ monastyr’* (Georgii, or The Otroch’ Monastery), which is based on a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Russian legend. Pospelova finished neither of these works, apparently finding her writing style wanting and refusing to publish anything before she had become more accomplished in her craft. Nevertheless, someone must have persuaded her to publish an ode, also written in 1803, in celebration of Alexander I’s birthday.<sup>12</sup>

In 1804 Pospelova returned to Moscow to live with her mother and be close to two of her sisters; shortly thereafter, she contracted consumption. The death of three of her nieces — all named after her — seemed to foreshadow her own, less than a year later, on 8 September 1805; she is buried in Donskoy Monastery.

### Pospelova’s critics and reviewers

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<sup>11</sup> Ewington, p. 348.

<sup>12</sup> Fedorov, p. 10.

Pospelova lived through the Russian aftermath of the French Revolution, a time when people were growing disillusioned with the Enlightenment notion that progress and civilisation could bring happiness to humanity. Its rationalistic approach fell out of favour as more and more writers turned to utopian descriptions of primordial happiness, which they attempted to convey in idealised visions of nature. Largely inspired by the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the notion of nature as an earthly paradise implies that women, thought to be estranged from culture, are particularly suitable symbols of goodness. The trend reinforced the Sentimentalist image of woman as a pious and virtuous being who longs for the hereafter.

Unlike more recent articles, 19<sup>th</sup>-century reviews on Pospelova tended to reproduce the Sentimentalist image of woman, which they project onto the author, describing her as a selfless young woman, an innocent country maiden, a precociously talented writer imbued with heavenly inspiration, or even as an angelic creature. Most biographical accounts focus on Pospelova's very young age, even though, at the time, publications by girls in their teens were not unusual.<sup>13</sup>

While commentators agree on the year of her death (1805), how old she actually was at the time is a matter for debate, and of some interest in terms of the age at which she published her first collection of poems in 1798. Mary Zirin mentions 1780 as the year of her birth, which would have made her eighteen that year.<sup>14</sup> Earlier authors argue for 1784 or 1783, in which case she would have been only fourteen or fifteen in 1798, more in keeping with a romantic view of the poet, and with echoes of the Sentimentalist tendency to infantilise women.<sup>15</sup> In one of the poems published in the 1798 collection, the narrator declares that she is sixteen, which would point to the year 1782 as Pospelova's year of birth. However, lyrical persona and author are not necessarily identical.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rosslyn 2000, *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>14</sup> Zirin 1994, 'Pospelova', p. 514;

Alessandra Tosi: *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801–1825)*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 2006, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> Khmyrov, p. 257;

Grigorii Gennadi: 'Pospelova, Mariia Alekseevna'. In: Gennadi, Grigorii (ed.): *Spravochnyi slovar' o russkikh pisateliakh i uchenykh umershih v XVIII i XIX stoletiiakh i spisok russkikh knig s 1725–1825 g.* [n.pub.]: Berlin 1876, p. 183;

Fedorov, p. 14;

D. Mordovtsev, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> 'Raz s shestnadsat' uzh vstrechala / Ia s ulybkoiu vesnu.': Pospelova 1798, 'Vesna', pp. 112–116 (p. 115).

Some reviewers of her life and work portray Pospelova as an innocent child of nature, identical to the narrator of her work. A case in point is the article published by B. Fedorov in 1824. Almost twenty years posthumously, the article continues to project the Sentimentalist image of woman onto Pospelova, opening with four lines from Vasilii Zhukovskii's poem, 'A Country Churchyard. An Elegy' (Sel'skoe kladbishche. Elegiia), a translation of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'. The passage expresses regret about the fact that a rare pearl often remains hidden in an unfathomable abyss, and that a solitary lily's scent is wasted in the desert. The quotation creates an image of a young Pospelova claimed by death before her writerly gift could fully develop. The metaphors of the pearl and the lily refer to the world of nature, and confirm the Sentimentalist equation of woman and nature. In particular, they echo the frequent cliché of the young and innocent woman (or, in pastorals, the shepherdess) who lives peacefully in the remote countryside, far from civilisation. The article emphasises Pospelova's modesty — which Sentimentalist discourse expected from women writers — by claiming that she never sought fame, that her works were destined to be read by friends and family, and that she never desired to impress anyone with her knowledge, nor to be seen as a scholar.<sup>17</sup>

Another review on Pospelova appeared in 1874, almost seventy years posthumously. Its author, D. Mordovtsev, presents an image of Pospelova as an innocent country maiden, emphasising what a rare and precious phenomenon she was by calling her a 'samorodok', Russian for 'nugget', the symbol of a naturally talented person. Although the reviewer concedes that a nugget requires the attention of a gem-cutter to reveal its true value, he is reluctant to present in positive terms the support Pospelova received from men of letters, regretting the fact that the nugget had been polished and shaped, and the effort had paid off in monetary terms. Instead, he dwells on Pospelova's secluded upbringing in provincial Vladimir, then a vibrant cultural centre, as has been pointed out. He emphasises her natural and precocious talent, claiming that her literary gift was spoilt once she had gained the reputation of talented woman author and people began to visit her. The review reveals the wish that a naturally gifted woman writer such as Pospelova should remain in an uneducated, 'unpolished' state rather than shine in the public light.

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<sup>17</sup> Fedorov, pp. 3–4.

M. Makarov compiled a set of notes on women writers and published an article on Pospelova in 1830, in which he presented her less as an innocent child of nature than as a gifted writer, her mentor Podshivalov's protégée. He mentions the support she received from other important men of letters including P. Sokhatskii, Kheraskov, Derzhavin, and Karamzin. Although Makarov mistook her patronymic, which was Timofeevna rather than Alexeevna, his review is an interesting source of information about the male and female authors Pospelova may have known or been familiar with. He also believed that it was works by other women authors which inspired her to take up the pen.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, most reviewers, including Federov and M. Khmyrov, who published an article on Pospelova in 1861, reproduce the Sentimentalist literary ideal of woman as a virgin ready for self-sacrifice. Several articles suggest that Pospelova refused a marriage proposal from a man much older than her so that she might be able to continue to care for her mother. Accounts of her death reveal a similar attitude, for instance when Fedorov claims that Pospelova died at the very hour the church bell was ringing for Mass. Heroism and self-sacrifice are other features added to her image by these reviewers, whose accounts of her death tell us that, ill with the consumption she contracted in her early twenties and sensing that death was near, Pospelova called for her sister but passed away in solitude, unwilling to subject her sibling to her own frightful appearance. Selflessness is another feature both Fedorov and Khmyrov ascribed to Pospelova, referring to a letter she had reportedly written to her sister in St Petersburg, which stated that it was her duty and pleasure to comfort her loved ones even in times when she, being seriously ill herself, was in need of support.

In their analyses of Pospelova's work, reviewers were reluctant to quote works she had written in the Sentimentalist vein, among them her pastorals and other pieces in which a female lyrical persona praises Creation, and whose tone is excessively rapturous. The critics seem to have preferred Pospelova's philosophical reflections, especially the ones published in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, which received high praise for their bold and lofty metaphors reminiscent of Derzhavin's. Reviewers also drew attention to Pospelova's panegyric odes, creating the impression that, although

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<sup>18</sup> Göpfert notes that Makarov's collection on Russian women writers belongs to the domain of journalism rather than to literary history, and that his comments should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt, see Frank Göpfert: *Russische Autorinnen von der Mitte bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Teil 1. 1750–1780. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2007, pp. 16–17.



their biographical accounts reproduced a Sentimentalist image in their praise of her as an angelic being, they felt uncomfortable with the impact of this perception on her literary self-image. The philosophical reflections in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth* make abundant use of sublime Ossianic and Romantic metaphors, ultimately proving more attractive than the somewhat sugary lyrical excesses of her Sentimentalist pastorals and hymns to Creation, which predominate in her first collection, *The Best Hours of My Life*. Unlike Anna Smirnova, mentioned in Chapter Three, who brought Romantic metaphors to bear on her representation of the woman poet, Pospelova used Romantic imagery only in her philosophical reflections.

### Nature worship

One review of Pospelova's life and work refers to her first collection, *The Best Hours of My Life*, or, by another title, *V uedinenie uklonivshiisia ot mira Khristiianin, ili uslazhdenie moei zhizni* (A Christian Who Has Turned away from the World to Solitude, or the Delight of My Life).<sup>19</sup> It reflects Pospelova's affinity with works of a profoundly religious nature popular at the time, such as Karamzin's *Besedy s bogom* (Conversations with God). The poems in this collection are also strongly influenced by the philosophical trend of Sensationalism, which I have outlined in Chapter Two.

Pospelova refers to relevant authors in her list of writers worthy of her admiration, including Gessner, Rousseau, James Thomson, and the Genevan natural scientist Charles Bonnet.<sup>20</sup> She also appears to have paid particular attention to the works of Karamzin, Russia's chief advocate of Sentimentalisation, for instance in her conception of 'natural' art, which alludes to his views on this topic. In his poem 'Darovaniia' (The Gift), published in 1797, Karamzin distinguishes between the inspiration the poet receives as he is standing in an Ossianic landscape typical for Romantic aesthetics, where the poet is exposed to the rough elements of untamed, uncultured, wild nature, and the inspiration which results from careful observation of an idyllic scenery. Honouring vastly gifted artists including Apelles, the ancient Greek

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<sup>19</sup> S. Russov: 'Pospelova, Mariia'. In: Russov, S. (ed.): *Bibliograficheskii katalog rossiiskim pisatel'nitsam*. [n.pub.]: St Petersburg 1826, p. 36.

Andrei Bolotov's daughter is reported to have read a work called *Khristianin v uedinenii* in the 1780s and other works celebrating nature as an earthly paradise, i.e. works he thought particularly suitable for girls. This attests to the then great popularity of such works, especially for young women, see Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'liun'', pp. 92–104 (p. 104); 'lasnaia zimnaia noch'', pp. 150–160 (pp. 158–159).

painter, 'The Gift' praises the way in which poetic works depict nature. Nature is the object of works created by someone who is receptive to its beauty. Karamzin's narrator alludes to poetry as follows:

Натуры каждое явление  
 И сердца каждое движение  
 Есть кисти твоя предмет;  
 Как в светлом, явственном кристалле,  
 Являешь ты в своем зеркале  
 Для глаз другой, прекрасный свет;  
 И часто прелесть в подражании  
 Милее чем в природе нам:  
 Лесок, цветочек в описании  
 Еще приятнее очам.

*Every feature found in nature,  
 And every movement of the heart  
 Becomes a subject for your brush;  
 In your mirror you present,  
 As though in a crystal clear and light,  
 The wondrous world for another eye;  
 And often your imitation's beauty  
 Is greater even than nature's own:  
 A wood, a flower in your description  
 Becomes more beautiful to the eye.<sup>21</sup>*

Karamzin adds a footnote to the last line quoted here, which explains the relationship between nature and art in more detail, repeating that the imitation of nature can be more attractive than the original:

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<sup>21</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Все прелести изящных Искусств суть нечто иное, как подражание Натуре; но копия бывает иногда лучше оригинала, по крайней мере делает его для нас всегда занимательнее: мы имеем удовольствие сравнивать.<sup>22</sup>

*All the wonders of the fine Arts are in essence nothing other than the imitation of Nature; but the copy can sometimes be better than the original, or at least make it more engaging for us: we have the pleasure of comparison.*<sup>23</sup>

Pospelova's prose poem, 'Sumerki' (Twilight), seems to take up the issue of the relationship between art and nature. In contrast to Karamzin, however, she considers nature to be more pleasing to the eye than any imitation of art:

Все превосходныя произведения искусства есть ничто иное, как подражание Природе, как излияние ея, и все славныя картины Апеллесов, Рафаелев и Корреджиев есть не что иное, как одна тень Природы, один лучь красоты ея.<sup>24</sup>

*All wonderful works of art are nothing other than the imitation of Nature, its outpouring, and all the famous paintings of Apelleses, Raphaels and Correggios are nothing more than a single shadow of Nature, one ray of her beauty.*<sup>25</sup>

The opening of this quotation echoes the beginning of Karamzin's comment almost word for word. Pospelova's prose poem also refers to famous artists including Apelles, which suggests that she was familiar with works not only by Karamzin but also by Renaissance artists such as Raphael or Correggio. Even though she denies that art can surpass nature in its beauty, she accepts Karamzin's view to some extent when she emulates his example of praising the way in which poetry reflects Creation.

In response to the deistic and pantheistic ideals of her time, Pospelova's work celebrates nature, presenting it as a Garden of Eden where the wandering lyrical

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<sup>22</sup> Nikolai Karamzin: *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Lotman, Iurii (ed.). Sovetskii pisatel': Moscow 1966. 'Darovaniia', pp. 213–227 (p. 219).

<sup>23</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>24</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Sumerki', pp. 51–62 (pp. 51–52).

<sup>25</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

persona continuously perceives manifestations of God's presence. Especially in her first collection, *The Best Hours of My Life*, the narrator bears similarities to the narrator of Karamzin's 'Progulka' (A Walk), whose religious feelings are aroused by his immediate surroundings, which he scrutinises with great care and attention. Pospelova's poetic and philosophical reflections in *The Best Hours of My Life* also very closely imitate Karamzin's 'A Walk', insofar as her narrator also goes for walks in nature, extolling its beauty, and voicing her veneration of the Creator of this earthly paradise.

Closeness to nature, both as a writer and as her narrator's voice allows Pospelova to describe Creation in her literary works. She expresses her gratitude to God for having endowed her with the ability to feel, perceive, and understand the miracles of the natural world. In spring and in daytime, which feature prominently in *The Best Hours of My Life*, she admires nature. In winter and at night, when its beauty is invisible, she muses on human vanity and on life's ephemerality, which are the main topics of *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*.

Contrary to Karamzin, however, whose world view seems to reproduce Ptolemy's geocentric system, Pospelova's interest in science compels her to describe a heliocentric constellation of the planets. She does, however, attribute extraordinary importance to the sun and to light, especially in *The Best Hours of My Life*. This imagery may have been influenced by the Masonic theme in Karamzin's writings. Pospelova also alludes to the notion that life existed on other planets, a view perhaps inspired by Karamzin's 'A Walk'. It also features in Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's manual about astronomy for women, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Conversations about the Variety of the Worlds), published in 1686.<sup>26</sup>

In their virtuousness, Pospelova's female lyrical personae not only resemble the narrator in Karamzin's 'A Walk', but also the ideal author outlined in his 1794 essay, 'What Does an Author Need?'.<sup>27</sup> Pospelova's poetic reflections describe walks in a natural environment and contemplations on Creation where woman is always flawless

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<sup>26</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Gimn Vsemogushchemu', pp. 27–37 (p. 30);

Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle: *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. Calame, Alexandre (ed.). Didier: Paris 1966. 'Second soir. Que la Lune est une Terre habitée', pp. 46–75, 'Troisième soir. Particularités du Monde de la Lune. Que les autres Planetes sont habitées aussi', pp. 76–101.

<sup>27</sup> Karamzin: 'Chto nuzhno avtoru?' In: *Izbrannye sochineniia* (2 vols.), Khudozhestvennaia literatura: Moscow 1964, Vol. II, pp. 120–122.

and morally impeccable. Likewise in her pastorals, where women are always virtuous beings who represent the object of male desire.

If, in Karamzin's 'A Walk', man is virtuous, elsewhere he is not quite so good. Erast in *Poor Liza* is corrupt, first seducing and then abandoning an innocent country maiden, and marrying a rich widow to solve his financial problems. Karamzin's men are frequently deprived of the innate goodness so strongly championed by Sentimentalism. Woman, on the other hand, is the epitome of virtue and morals, and if she fails to adhere to these principles, she must end her life in suicide, as in Karamzin's *Poor Liza*.<sup>28</sup> It is a gender pattern reproduced in Pospelova's works.

In her descriptions of Creation, Pospelova employs the Sentimentalist celebration of nature, and of the idea that women in particular were closer to nature than culture. *The Best Hours of My Life* features most of her poems in which woman's closeness to nature becomes evident. They often refer to Genesis, bearing titles such as 'Vesna' (Spring), 'Utrenniaia progulka' (A Morning Stroll), or 'Maiscoe utro' (May Morning); nature is invariably described as an earthly paradise and as a repository of divine wisdom.<sup>29</sup> Close observation of nature supplies proof of God's existence and benevolence. Pospelova's 'Twilight' presents the narrator's perception of nature as a reflection of paradise; she addresses nature as a 'clear reflection of the perfection of the Almighty' (ясное зеркало совершенств Всемогущаго). Heaven and earth merge in her admiring gaze which perceives paradise in everything. The same poem reveals Pospelova's pantheistic approach, in which God's existence manifests itself in nature:

Чрез тебя [натуру] созерцаем мы Бездначальное, Бесконечное,  
Всесовершеннейшее, везде сущее Существо...<sup>30</sup>

*Through you [nature] we perceive the Being that has no beginning and  
no end, is all powerful and omnipresent...*<sup>31</sup>

The narrator's eye wanders from the most minute objects of Creation, such as a grain of sand, to the most majestic, such as the stars in the sky, finding in them evidence of

<sup>28</sup> Inna Gorbato: *Formation du concept de Sentimentalisme dans la littérature russe. L'Influence de J.J. Rousseau sur l'œuvre de N. M. Karamzin*. Peter Lang Verlag: Paris 1991, p. 134.

<sup>29</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Vesna', pp. 112–116; 'Utrenniaia progulka', pp. 75–83; 'Maiscoe utro', pp. 73–74.

<sup>30</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Sumerki', pp. 51–62 (pp. 52–53, 56).

<sup>31</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

God's plan. Inspired by contemplation of nature, she associates astronomical knowledge with praise of the Creator. The Earth is one world among an infinity of others, a notion which makes frequent appearances in Pospelova's work.<sup>32</sup>

Especially in *The Best Hours of My Life*, Pospelova reproduces the Sentimentalist feminisation of nature: she is the daughter of God and the agent of Divine Providence. 'Vremia' (Time) attributes angelic features to nature depicted as a young woman bathed in bright light, who is called a 'Daughter of the heavens / In a light and radiant robe' (Дщерь небес / В ризе светлой, лучезарной). Since nature is regarded as an earthly paradise, a person suitably predisposed in mind and spirit is capable of internalising and appropriating the notion of paradise, just as the narrator is in Karamzin's 'A Walk'. The natural environment on a spring morning in May, for instance, leaves the lyrical persona's soul enraptured.

### Spiritual illumination

Being open to the divine essence of nature enables Pospelova's lyrical persona to be spiritually illuminated. Spiritual illumination can be achieved equally through religion or through nature. The parallel is evident in the frequent recurrence of the expression 'Blessed is he who...' (*blazhen, kto...*) in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, where it also refers to a realm of spiritual delight.<sup>33</sup> To Pospelova, there is no room for sorrow in the heart of a person who can attune herself to nature. Having delivered an ecstatic description of Creation, the narrator in 'Twilight' declares that 'My soul is in sympathy with Nature' (Душа моя симпатически согласуется с Природою).<sup>34</sup>

Pospelova's work mainly ascribes being in harmony with nature to the female narrator, endorsing Sentimentalism's conception of women as pure and virtuous creatures. The flawless woman who mirrors paradise occurs throughout all genres, be they lyrical prose poems or pastorals. Whenever a poem is about happiness, Pospelova's lyrical persona speaks in a female voice and conforms with the Sentimentalist idealisation of woman.

Pospelova's tendency to paint an idealised image of women emerges particularly strongly from the similar use she makes of paradise in her panegyric and

<sup>32</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'liun'', pp. 92–104 (p. 99); Pospelova 1798, 'Vremia', pp. 21–26 (p. 21).

<sup>33</sup> 'Blazhen, kto s dobrymi druzhitsia!' (p. 14), 'Blazhen narod, Ego poznavshii!' (p. 22), 'Blazhen, kto Vechnago boitsia' (p. 25), 'Blazhenny te, cho upovaiut / Na Boga — im gotov venets' (p. 25), all in Pospelova 1801.

<sup>34</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Sumerki', pp. 51–62 (pp. 60–62).

religious odes, psalm translations, and celebrations of Creation. In her panegyric odes which open *The Best Hours of My Life*, Pospelova ascribes angelic features to the tsarina's soul and appearance.<sup>35</sup> Rulers are often said to bear God's likeness, which is why they are destined to restore paradise on earth.<sup>36</sup> A religious ode describes heaven as the seat of God, whose throne is surrounded by angels.<sup>37</sup> Translations of psalms open *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, depicting heaven, the true believer's spiritual paradise, the place where light shines in perpetuity. By associating her female narrator with similar notions of paradise and light, Pospelova achieves a symbolic elevation.

Pospelova's narrators often describe spiritual illuminations which resemble mystical experiences, enhancing her symbolic authority. In 'May Morning' from *The Best Hours of My Life*, for example, she is receptive to Creation and therefore in a position to be spiritually illuminated:

Все виды прелестями блистают  
И дух в восторг приводят мой.<sup>38</sup>

*Every vista sparkles with charm  
And enraptures my spirit.*<sup>39</sup>

Similarly in 'Twilight', where nature is described as follows:

Ты возвышаешь душу мою, ты наполняешь сердце мое небесною  
сладостью.

*You inspire my soul, you fill my heart with heavenly sweetness.*

In the same poem, contemplation of nature leaves the female narrator enraptured:

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<sup>35</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Oda na den' Tezoimenitstva Eiia Imperatorskago Vysochestva Velikoi Kniagini Elisavety Alekseevny', pp. 1–5.

<sup>36</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Oda na torzhestvennoi V'ezd Ikh Imperatorskikh Velichestv v Moskvu', pp. 6–11 (p. 9).

<sup>37</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Oda na den' Rozhdestva Khristova', pp. 33–39.

<sup>38</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Maiskoe utro', pp. 73–74 (p. 73);

<sup>39</sup> Ewington, pp. 357–359 (p. 357).

The entire Russian original and an English translation of this poem can be found in the Appendix.

Сердце мое пресыщено твоими благодеяниями. Ты наполнила душу мою райским удовольствием.<sup>40</sup>

*My heart is sated with your blessings. You have filled my soul with heavenly pleasure.*<sup>41</sup>

In the poem 'Spring' from *The Best Hours of My Life*, the narrator even compares herself to an angel because of her receptivity to the beauty of Creation. She describes the idylls of spring before declaring,

Погружена в размышленьи  
Я в молчаньи здесь стою,  
Иль в сердечном восхищеньи  
Я натуре песнь пою,  
Иль пришед в восторг небесной  
Духом к небесам парю.  
Тамо благодати чудесной  
Жертву приношу мою.  
Души чувством благородной  
Свет блаженства райской зрю, —  
Свет небесный, лучезарный,  
Благ божественных зарю,  
Что я? что в сии минуты?  
Ангел, или человек.<sup>42</sup>

*Deep in contemplation,  
In silence here I stand,  
Or in heartfelt admiration  
I sing a hymn to nature,  
Or in a heavenly rapture*

<sup>40</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Sumerki', pp. 51–62 (57, 62).

<sup>41</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>42</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Vesna', pp. 112–116 (p. 114).



*My soul soars to the skies.*  
*I bring my sacrifice*  
*To the miraculous goodness.*  
*With feelings of a noble soul*  
*I see the light of heavenly bliss—*  
*I see the heavenly, radiant*  
*Light of divine goodness,*  
*What am I? In these moments?*  
*Angel or human?*<sup>43</sup>

Like the true believer in Pospelova's psalm translations, the lyrical persona experiences spiritual illumination. However, while in the psalms the reason for this illumination is faith, here it is the narrator's receptivity to Creation. Pospelova's 'Gimn Vsemogushchemu' (Hymn to the Almighty) further illustrates the narrator's response to a near-mystical contemplation of nature:

Какой небесной дух объемлет мой восторг?  
 Я сладость райскую в душе своей вкушаю, ...<sup>44</sup>

*What heavenly spirit can encompass my joy?*  
*I taste Edenic sweetness in my soul, ...*<sup>45</sup>

The soul of the pious woman poet reflects nature, the mirror image of paradise. In *The Best Hours of My Life*, Pospelova enhances her female lyrical persona's symbolic standing by describing her spiritual illuminations and making her resemble a mystic. The elevation goes even further in her philosophical contemplations, which are the main topic of *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*. Here the narrator reflects on the importance of virtue, condemning people who fail to respect it. In her judging of other people's behaviour, the narrator comes across almost as a saint, albeit one who may be accused of vanity.

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<sup>43</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>44</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Gimn Vsemogushchemu', pp. 27–37 (p. 35).

<sup>45</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Pospelova's presentation of her female lyrical personae as mystics resembles the strategy of other religious women writers at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Anna Turchaninova, whose poems address questions of faith, vanity, virtue, and death. She praises virtue in 'Utekhi Dobrodeteli' (The Pleasures of Virtue), longs for the hereafter in 'Oda dostoinstva smerti' (An Ode on the Worthiness of Death), and warns people about the transitoriness of life in 'Sebe Epitafiia' (An Epitaph to Myself).<sup>46</sup> 'V moem sadike' (In My Little Garden) celebrates solitude and spiritual introspection, and refers to nature as the place where divine truth is revealed:

Там природы глас священный  
мне ту истинну вещал:  
что из смертных тот блаженный,  
кто лишь сам себя познал.<sup>47</sup>

*There, nature's sacred voice  
Entrusted to me that truth:  
That of all mortals he is blessed  
Who only came to know himself.*<sup>48</sup>

In 'Glas smernago k Bogu' (The Voice of a Mortal to God), Turchaninova's lyrical persona associates images of paradise with professions of faith, just as Pospelova's has done:

Мысль когда к тебе стремится,  
в сердце образ твой живет;  
ничего дух не страшится,  
Рай в душе моей цветет.<sup>49</sup>

*When my thoughts turn to you,*

<sup>46</sup> Anna Turchaninova: [Unpublished poems.] Russian National Library, Russkii rukopisnyi fond, Fond Derzhavina № 43, XXV, pp. 101–107. 'Utekhi Dobrodeteli', (f. 3). 'Oda dostoinstva smerti', (f. 3–4); 'Sebe Epitafiia', (f. 5–6).

<sup>47</sup> Turchaninova, 'V moem sadike', (f. 2).

<sup>48</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>49</sup> Turchaninova, 'Glas smernago k Bogu', (f. 4).

*Your image lives in my heart;  
My spirit fears nothing on Earth,  
Heaven blossoms in my soul.*<sup>50</sup>

Pospelova's pastorals feature similar images. Here, however, the notion of paradise is associated to the shepherdess, whose image the shepherd carries in his soul. For women poets with religious inclinations, such as Turchaninova or Pospelova, perfection is personified either by God if the narrator is female, or by a woman if the narrator is male.

In presenting her female narrator as a mystic, Pospelova combines an element of irrationality with Sentimentalism's idealised conception of woman. The mystical female character's receptivity to the divine essence elevates her above common people. In keeping with Sentimentalist literary convention, she is also flawless and virtuous. As an article on Pospelova demonstrates, women writers often had to come to terms with other people's unflattering views of them. The reviewer reports that her talent aroused suspicions that she might be immoral, a monstrous abnormality.<sup>51</sup> Are references to aspects of her image which emphasise her commitment to the Sentimentalist ideal of femininity Pospelova's attempt to avoid perceptions of women authors as repulsive aberrations of nature?

### **Writing as a spontaneous act**

In her representation of the creative process in *The Best Hours of My Life*, the moment of inspiration and the time of writing are brought closely together. The prose poem, 'Razsuzhdenie' (Deliberation), for instance, opens as follows:

После прекрасного дня наступила тихая ясная ночь. Все было тихо, все безмолвствовало, и Природа предалась уже приятному успокоению. Проводя сумерки в разговорах с друзьями милыми душе моей, оставила я их наслаждаться приятностями сна: но растроганное сердце мое, разсennыя мысли мои не позволяли мне вкусить онаго.

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<sup>50</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>51</sup> Mordovtsev, p. 41.

*After a beautiful day came a quiet and clear night. Everything was quiet, and nature gave in to pleasant calm. After spending the twilight in conversation with friends dear to my soul, I left them in order to enjoy the pleasures of sleep: but my heart that was so touched, my ranging thoughts did not permit me to taste them.*

The lyrical persona then contemplates the night sky, which inspires her to reflections on human existence. These reflections constitute the main theme of the text, which concludes with a hint that she was recording her thoughts as soon as they occurred to her:

Но сон смыкает уже зеницы мои. Я ослабеваю, — перо падает из рук моих.<sup>52</sup>

*But sleep is already closing my eyes. I weaken—the pen falls from my hands.*<sup>53</sup>

In other poems, such as ‘A Morning Stroll’ from *The Best Hours of My Life*, which renders the narrator’s impressions, immediacy is evoked by terms which refer to the landscape around her (my italics):

*Везде слышимы хоры мальеньких сладкогласных птичек. [...] Здесь видны гроты, коих никакое искусство человеческое произвести не может; тут на зеленой ветке розмарина с восхитительными трелями поет соловей весеннюю песнь свою.*<sup>54</sup>

*Everywhere can be heard the choirs of little sweet-songed birds [...] Here you can see caves who could not have been produced by any human art; there on a green branch of rosemary a nightingale sits and sings, with wondrous trills, its springtime song.*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Pospelova 1798, ‘Razsuzhdenie’, pp. 63–72 (p. 63, p. 72).

<sup>53</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>54</sup> Pospelova 1798, ‘Utrenniaia progulka’, pp. 75–83 (p. 75, pp. 77–78).

<sup>55</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

The narrator stands in a landscape described as an earthly paradise; most verbs are in the present tense, which is typical both of references to paradise and of panegyric odes, which tend to associate the tsar and tsarina to God or an angel. Elegies, on the other hand, which recall moments of the past, are in the past tense. By presenting nature as a Garden of Eden and the narrator as its interpreter, Pospelova responds to the cultural discourse of her time. As Karamzin maintained in his essay, 'What Does an Author Need?', a poet should have a sensitive heart. He also demands harmony between the poet and his inspiring environment. Pospelova's female lyrical personae display just these features; moreover, they endorse the Sentimentalist conception of woman as a being more akin to nature than culture. Since Creation is inherently good and a poet receptive to Creation, the notion of goodness transfers to the poet. Pospelova's narrator is an artless, pious, and virtuous woman who records anything her attentive eye discerns. The creation of literature is described as a spontaneous act. Rather than a combination of inspiration and craft, it is a 'splurge of emotions', to use Matt Barnard's expression.<sup>56</sup>

Pospelova's attitude stands in opposition to the Classicist view of the artistic process, which Nicholas Boileau defined as a time-consuming, careful, and often tedious activity, and which he summarised in his advice to the poet to carefully 'polish' his verse.<sup>57</sup> In Sentimentalism, the conception of writing as a spontaneous act was highly esteemed because it was believed to document innate human goodness. Contrary to Enlightenment discourse and its more pessimistic conception of the human character, Sentimentalism emphasised the potential of revealing and reverting to humanity's prelapsarian goodness. Due to their close association with nature, women were thought to be particularly able to manifest innate goodness; their alleged estrangement from civilisation made them the ideal medium for a poetic interpretation of Creation. In the Sentimentalist myth of artistic creation, the poetic work is naturally perfect; no editing and shaping — 'polishing' — is required to enhance its quality.

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<sup>56</sup> Matt Barnard: "'Splurge of Emotion" or a Combination of Inspiration and Craft? Poetry's Great Debate and the Lessons of Rhyme and Reason', *The Times* 9 Sept. 1999, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> 'Polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez'. Nicolas Boileau: *Satires, Épitres, Art poétique*. Collinet, Jean-Pierre (ed.). Gallimard: Paris 1985, p. 231.  
In English: 'Polish, repolish, every Colour lay', see Nicolas Boileau: *The Art of Poetry*. Soames, William (transl.). Bentley and Magnes: London 1683, p. 11.

Pospelova's statements about the spontaneous creation of poetry may not have borne much resemblance to her actual writing practice, but were more likely her way of justifying her writerly activity. As mentioned in my biographical overview, both her brothers and sisters and, at a later stage, her mentors advised her on her literary endeavours — a far remove from the image of a girl abandoned in nature suggested here.

In the preface to *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, however, she also refers to her alleged closeness to nature as an explanation of why she became a writer. This preface is longer than that of her first collection, *The Best Hours of My Life*, which she wrote mainly to attract the patronage of Elizaveta Alexeevna, Alexander I's wife, to whom it is dedicated. As has been mentioned, the 1801 preface is dedicated more broadly to 'noble and sensitive souls', of whom she asks forgiveness for any shortcomings they may find in her work, declaring that their benevolence is the only reward she is seeking from the publication. These concluding remarks, relatively short in comparison to the remainder of the introduction, are her way of meeting the requirements of modesty expected of Sentimentalist women poets. The main part of the introduction tells the reader about her poor childhood, despite which she is eager to acquire knowledge. She further stresses that the careful observation of nature has helped her to educate her mind, an ability which distinguished her from other children. She also claims to have been spiritually illuminated by nature:

Природа одарила меня чувствительностью, образовала разум мой  
способным к размышлениям. Святая истинна озарила его небесным лучем  
своим. Бедной ребенок, возрастающий в углу маленького домика,  
забвенной щастием, не забыт оными. Кипящее желание к познанию  
воспламеняло дух мой. Внимание к трогательным красотам природы  
отличило меня от детей обыкновенных.

*Nature has given me sensitivity, made my intellect capable of reflection. Holy truth has enlightened it with its heavenly ray. A poor child, growing up in the corner of a small cottage, forgotten by happiness, was not forgotten by them. A burning desire for knowledge enflamed my soul. Attention to the touching beautiful details of nature set me apart from ordinary children.*

Next she refers to the contemplations of nature described in her first collection of poems, *The Best Hours of My Life*, before introducing her reflections on questions of morals and virtue which she intends to present in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*. Again, she expresses regret that she was not given a more thorough education:

Между тем любимая природою и ненавидимая счастьем, я плакала,  
грустила, и унывала от того, что способы к просвещению были отняты от  
меня, и что лучшие способности мои должны были оставаться  
усыпленными.<sup>58</sup>

*Meanwhile beloved of nature and spurned by happiness, I wept, grieved and  
was miserable because the paths to enlightenment were taken from me, and  
my best qualities were destined to remain dormant.*<sup>59</sup>

Pospelova here declares that self-knowledge is the most precious kind of science, and that she writes chiefly to celebrate nature and virtue. She is probably making a virtue out of necessity in declaring that her writing of poetry is simply inspired by nature and therefore artless — it is a way of not appearing self-important. Her preface makes it clear that Pospelova was very eager to acquire knowledge but may not have had sufficient means to do so. Another explanation is that it was unseemly in a woman to openly admit her interest in learning and study, which may be why she played it down.

### **The shepherd's torments**

As mentioned before, Pospelova's female lyrical personae are always in harmony — and therefore happy — with nature's paradise. This contrasts with Anna Bunina's poetry, in which a woman's feelings sometimes fall far short of flourishing nature. On the other hand, when Pospelova addresses emotional grief, she uses a male narrator, for example in most of her pastorals, where the rejected shepherd's feelings clash with the idyllic nature of a *locus amoenus*. Pospelova imitates the pastoral's traditional gender pattern, according to which an unhappy shepherd laments his beloved's

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<sup>58</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Liubeznaia dobrodetel'! Milaia chuvstvitel'nost'!' [n.p.].

<sup>59</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

absence. Both collections, *The Best Hours of My Life* as well as *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, feature some poems where a male narrator expresses his grief at being separated from his beloved, 'Ekloga' (Eclogue), for instance, in the former, and 'Golos liubvi' (The Voice of Love) and 'Voskhishchenie vliublennago' (Admiration of One in Love) in the latter.<sup>60</sup> Probably due to the pastoral being a lighter genre, they tend to be placed at the end. In contrast, Pospelova tended to place panegyric odes, religious and philosophical reflections at the beginning of her works. In her poem 'Eclogue' from *The Best Hours of My Life*, the shepherd's emotional torments render him blind to his idyllic environment even though nature presents itself in its most appealing guise of a magnificent morning in spring. The star-crossed lover only sees an ugly world. He neglects his flock of sheep, no longer cultivates his garden, and begins to long for death. Only when his beloved has returned does he rediscover happiness and harmony with his spring-like environment. As occurs frequently in pastorals, the beloved shepherdess has only feigned coldness to test the truth of his feelings, thus displaying her virtue.

'The Voice of Love' is a further illustration of woman's function in the pastoral to instil happiness in the shepherd. A single glance of his beloved is enough to fill his heart with joy, and to be loved by the woman he adores is a feeling he compares to paradise:

Милой, милой быть любимым,  
Это в жизни сущий рай.<sup>61</sup>

*By my dear, my dear, to be loved  
Is heaven on earth.*<sup>62</sup>

To the male narrator of the poem 'Admiration of One in Love' from *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, it is the presence of his beloved Tashin'ka which restores nature to a state of blossoming growth, just as Persephone's reappearance revived spring:

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<sup>60</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Ekloga', pp. 94–102; Pospelova 1801, 'Golos liubvi', pp. 198–200; 'Voskhishchenie vliublennago', pp. 196–198.

<sup>61</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Golos liubvi', pp. 198–200 (p. 200).

<sup>62</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



Вся природа предо мною  
 Вид прелестной приняла;  
 Она Ташинька тобою  
 Ожилась, расцвела.<sup>63</sup>

*All nature before me  
 Has taken on a wondrous aspect;  
 Tashin'ka, you have made her  
 Come to life, and blossom.*<sup>64</sup>

In her role as mediator between heaven and earth, the shepherdess in Pospelova's work is assigned the task of transferring a glimpse of eternal light to man: the narrator exclaims that even when the sun does not shine, Tashin'ka's presence illuminates darkness for him.

Pospelova's interpretation of the pastoral also merges concepts of nature and youth. This is illustrated in the poem 'Svirel' (The Pipe) from *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, again written from a shepherd's point of view. He describes his idyllic environment, singing the praise of his beloved Klarisa. In his description of the landscape, young girls and boys literally blossom like flowers:

Пастушки милые цветите,  
 Цветите юны пастушки;  
 Сердца любовью живите,  
 Как солнца луч живит цветки!<sup>65</sup>

*Blossom, gentle shepherdesses,  
 Young shepherd boys, blossom;  
 Bring your hearts to life with love  
 As sunlight brings to life flowers!*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Voskhishchenie vliublennago', pp. 196–198 (p. 197).

<sup>64</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>65</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Svirel', pp. 85–91 (p. 89).

<sup>66</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

In this world of everlasting spring, youth, and happiness, woman never experiences disappointment in love, and her feelings for her beloved shepherd are pure and absolute.<sup>67</sup> In poems which celebrate Creation, the landscape never contrasts the feelings of the female narrator. In the poem 'Spring' from *The Best Hours of My Life*, which describes a stroll in an idyllic landscape, the female lyrical persona recognises the reflection of paradise in nature whenever she turns her gaze to it, and this insight fills her with happiness.<sup>68</sup> Women live in an ideal and idyllic world of innocent happiness and peace, where disharmony and conflict are non-existent; neither envy, nor mockery, nor artificial behaviour is known among them, as the poem 'Veчерnee razmyshlenie' (Evening Reflection), from *The Best Hours of My Life* suggests.<sup>69</sup>

Although feelings of shared love are the source of happiness, they cannot protect humans from the blows of Fate, as the example of Doris and Tsintsia in 'Nepostoianstvo shchastiia' (The Inconstancy of Happiness), probably inspired by Gessner, from *The Best Hours of My Life* demonstrates. The couple dies in a storm on a journey that should have taken them to a new land.<sup>70</sup> The poem is a reminder that true happiness is not to be found on this earth, but awaits the virtuous and pious only in the hereafter.

### **Gothic imagery**

The image of woman as an angelic creature is particularly evident in those poems by Pospelova that exhibit features of otherworldliness and Gothic elements. Pospelova uses the fundamental elements of pastoral literature as a framework, but combines them with Gothic imagery in order to evoke the bleak mental disposition which seizes the man who grieves the absence of his beloved. The Gothic elements thus illustrate the mental hell he traverses.

The collection *The Best Hours of My Life* includes two poems which feature Gothic imagery and elements of otherworldliness. In 'Zhaloba neshchastnago liubovnika' (Complaint of an Unhappy Lover) and in 'Stenanie pri grobe druga' (Grief at the Grave of a Friend), the male narrator refers to Gothic imagery and elements of otherworldliness in order to express his grief about the separation from a beloved

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<sup>67</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Veчер liubvi', pp. 117–119.

<sup>68</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Vesna', pp. 112–116.

<sup>69</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Veчерnee razmyshlenie', pp. 84–93 (pp. 91–92).

<sup>70</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Nepostoianstvo shchastiia', pp. 129–139; Gessner 1988, 'Mirtill. Thyrsis', pp. 43–44; 'Der Sturm', pp. 126–128.

person.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps these poems are placed in the second half of the collection because they address the topic of love, which was considered to be a lighter genre, in contrast to the panegyric poems, which are placed at the beginning of the collection.

‘Complaint of an Unhappy Lover’ illustrates how the individual with whom the narrator is in love often has features of otherworldliness. The male narrator longs for death after having lost his beloved. While being tormented by his death wishes he suddenly has a vision in which he recognises the girl he loved. She has the appearance of an angel, and is the image of virtue and innocent charm. When the apparition of the woman with the otherworldly features disappears, the man’s wish for his own death grows even stronger, and he wants to join his beloved in the hereafter.<sup>72</sup>

Otherworldliness and Gothic imagery also help to create the gloomy ambiance in the poem ‘Grief at the Grave of a Friend’. In this poem Doris is grieving over the death of his friend Aris, and during a sleepless and moonlit night he visits the grave where his friend is buried. Leaning over the cold marble of the tombstone he remembers how his friend had a foreboding of his own death: he had heard the voice of an angel telling him that paradise lived in the heart of the virtuous.<sup>73</sup> This poem is the only instance where paradise and virtue are symbolized not by a woman, but by a man. A precondition for this function is that he appears as a virtuous, mysterious, and supernatural being, like the women in Pospelova’s other poems.

Two pastorals in Pospelova’s *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, ‘Nichto ne mozhет uteshat’ v razluke s miloiu’ (Nothing Can Comfort Me When I’m Parted from My Beloved) and ‘Pechal’ ili priblizhenie zimy’ (Sorrow, or the Coming of Winter), feature Gothic imagery but do not include any elements of otherworldliness. In each of these an unhappy shepherd grieves over the absence of his beloved woman. The Gothic imagery used to depict nature reflects his state of mind. In ‘Nothing Can Comfort Me When I’m Parted from My Beloved’, the sorrowful shepherd wanders the earth, revisiting all the places where he shared happy moments with his beloved (my italics):

*Там с ревом водопад шумящий*

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<sup>71</sup> Pospelova 1798, ‘Zhaloba neshchastnago liubovnika’, pp. 103–111; ‘Stenanie pri grobe druga’, pp. 120–128.

<sup>72</sup> Pospelova 1798, ‘Zhaloba neshchastnago liubovnika’, pp. 103–111.

<sup>73</sup> Pospelova 1798, ‘Stenanie pri grobe druga’, pp. 120–128.

С скалы серебристы воды льет:  
 Здесь тихо ручеек журчащий  
 По бархатным лугам течет,  
 Цветы, кусточки орошает  
 Кристаллом чистых вод своих,  
 Или серебристыми играет  
 Струями на песках златых.  
 Там мрачной бор вдали чернеет  
 На диком берегу шумных вод;  
 А здесь приятно зеленеет  
 Из ветвей соплетенный свод.  
 Там сосны, дубы возвышают  
 Свои вершины к облакам,  
 Вкруг черны тени простирают;  
 А здесь прелестной вид глазам  
 Лужок зеленой представляет  
 Своей приятной пестротой.<sup>74</sup>

*There roars a waterfall noisily  
 As its silver waters pour from a cliff:  
 Here a brook gurgles quietly  
 As it flows over velvet meadows,  
 It scatters all the flowers and bushes  
 With crystals of its waters pure,  
 And then it sends out streams of silver  
 That play upon the golden sand.  
 There a far-off gloomy wood's  
 On wild banks of noisy waters;  
 But here it's green and pleasant to be  
 Beneath an arch of twining branches.  
 There the pines and oaks raise up*

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<sup>74</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Nichto ne mozhet uteshat' v razluke s miloiu', pp. 130–138 (pp. 131–132).

*Their treetops to the clouds above,  
And round about them stretch out shadows;  
But what a wondrous sight is here  
Presented by a lush green meadow  
With its pleasing dappled colours.*<sup>75</sup>

The shepherd goes to the blooming meadows, to a little brook with crystal waters and to a grove. Each one of these manifestations of a *locus amoenus* is compared to that of a *locus terribilis*, a dark and barren place. Romantic and Gothic features appear in the guise of roaring waterfalls tumbling from cliffs, dark coniferous forests on the shores of thunderous waters, pine and oak trees whose tops are so high that they touch the clouds and cast dark shadows on the ground. Such references to a *locus terribilis* depict the bleak state of mind into which the separation from his beloved has thrown the shepherd. The dichotomy is emphasised by the syntactic structure of this section. The adverb *zdes'* (here) introduces descriptions of the *locus amoenus*, whereas lines which portray the *locus terribilis* begin with *tam* (there). Just as in other poems which include imagery associated with the paradise myth, these opposing pairs of adverbs are indicators of the two contrasting worlds of paradise and hell.<sup>76</sup>

The poem 'Sorrow, or the Coming of Winter' also describes a gloomy Gothic landscape. The *locus terribilis* stands for the male narrator's state of mind. The *locus terribilis* also foreshadows the barren state of nature that the winter season brings:

В какой природа дикой мрачной,  
Угрюмой облеклася вид!  
Нет прелестей в долине злачной.  
Борей свирепствует, шумит; —

*What a wild and gloomy, sullen  
Look has nature taken on!  
No beauty in this luscious valley.  
The North Wind is raging noisily; —*

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<sup>75</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Lessing Baehr: *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia. Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture*. Stanford University Press: Stanford CA 1991, p. 8.

Nature acts as a mirror for the desolate state of mind into which the beloved girl's absence casts the male narrator. Just as in the classical myth Persephone's descent into the dark underworld provokes the arrival of cold and inhospitable winter, the parting from Lizeta prevents our shepherd from finding heaven on earth again. Her absence causes him to long for death:

Тоскою грудь моя стесненна  
И хлад разлит в крови моей.  
Душа страдает возмущенна,  
Уж радости нет места в ней.<sup>77</sup>

*Sadness weighs heavily on my breast  
And cold is poured into my blood.  
My soul is suffering, tormented,  
Has no place now for any joy.<sup>78</sup>*

However, in the shepherd's soul, the image of his beloved Lizeta continues to exist; her presence has the power to bring paradise into his soul, even in the midst of winter.

These poems further exemplify the strong association in the pastoral of heaven, woman and the paradisiacal nature of spring. Their absence, which is often associated with Gothic imagery, kindles the male narrator's creativity. Woman's purpose in the pastoral is to inspire the man; she is the object of his elegiac monologues. Since laments about the beloved's absence are expressed by a man, never by a woman, the pastoral instrumentalises and objectifies woman, suppressing her ability to articulate conflict.

### **Pastoral imagery in philosophical and religious reflections**

In her philosophical and religious reflections, Pospelova employs metaphors of the *locus amoenus* and the *locus terribilis*, as well as Gothic imagery. These are the only instances where a female narrator addresses topics which deal with conflict and

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<sup>77</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Pechal' ili priblizhenie zimy', pp. 179–185 (pp. 179–180).

<sup>78</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

disharmony. Most of the reflections on existential fears and spiritual doubts can be found in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth*, where they constitute the main theme. In poems such as 'Chelovek' (A Person), 'Groza' (The Thunderstorm), 'Osen'' (Autumn), or 'Iasnaia zimniaia noch'' (A Clear Winter's Night), Pospelova employs the pastoral's contrasting metaphors, combining them with religious topics. She depicts the idyllic nature of spring when emphasising the strength of Christian belief, opposing this imagery to a gloomy landscape, reminiscent of the rejected shepherd's bleak state of mind, when musing on the absence of spiritual faith.<sup>79</sup> Often she adds Gothic elements to her depiction of the *locus terribilis*. The fundamental difference between her philosophical essays and her pastorals is therefore the choice of topic and the gender of the narrator: rather than expressing grief about the unattainability of a beloved person, Pospelova's female narrator voices her concerns about the lack of religious faith and virtues in her fellow men and women.

The philosophical thoughts articulated in the poem 'A Person' exemplify Pospelova's tendency to adapt pastoral metaphors to reflections on the human condition. Here the lyrical persona associates with a feeling of hope the soothing light of the sun as it reappears after dark clouds have passed. The scene includes the key elements of a *locus amoenus*: gentle and pleasant Zephyrs, trees turning green, lilies and roses beginning to blossom, water babbling in little brooks, the smiling Graces making an appearance, extending their hands — happiness and peace reign everywhere.

However, when hope is absent, the author draws a truly apocalyptic picture: gone is the nightingales' delightful song; gales, monsters and serpents are hissing, howling, moaning and whistling; the gaping maw of an abyss has replaced the delightful flower-strewn fields; anguish and despair reign; eyes throw venomous darts, a sickening stench rises from seething rivers of blood.<sup>80</sup> Nature no longer reflects paradise but has been transformed into a hellish vale of tears, as inhospitable a place as the *locus terribilis* in which the pastoral's afflicted shepherd finds himself.

In Pospelova's essay 'The Thunderstorm', the absence of a *locus amoenus* offers the narrator an opportunity to reflect on people's limited control of their lives. Pospelova describes the shift to a far-from-idyllic setting in great detail: the birds have

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<sup>79</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Chelovek', pp. 104–114; 'Groza', pp. 190–196; 'Osen'', pp. 70–84; 'Iasnaia zimniaia noch'', pp. 150–160.

<sup>80</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Chelovek', pp. 104–114.

fallen silent; cowed sheep no longer cavort cheerfully in green meadows; the lilies' heads are drooping. Instead, the wildness and unrest of an Ossianic landscape presents itself to the reader: black crows emit their strident croaks, dark clouds gather, thunder and lightning approach, torrents of rain and hail batter the ground. The battle of the elements shows the vanity and insignificance of human existence. The text concludes with the narrator's moralising call to lead a pious and virtuous life.<sup>81</sup> This is an impressive illustration of Pospelova's strategy of transferring *locus terribilis* imagery from a love-lyrical context to a moralistic-religious contemplation.

The idyllic setting of the *locus amoenus* also serves as a contrast in another of Pospelova's essays, 'Autumn'. The narrator describes her impressions of an autumnal landscape, contrasting it to the pleasant state of nature in spring and summer. The green of the meadows has turned a yellowy red, the flowers have gone, dry leaves are falling to the ground, the colourful butterflies have vanished, as have the little birds — everything is dismal and gloomy.<sup>82</sup> The absence of spring imbues this narrator with melancholy, just as the pastoral's unhappy shepherd. By describing autumn rather than spring, the text avoids the Sentimentalist expectation placed on the female voice to symbolise paradise. Similarly, by presenting an unidyllic winter setting in 'A Clear Winter's Night', the female narrator does not need to launch into rapturous odes to Creation, but is allowed to express her true thoughts instead.<sup>83</sup>

The female lyrical persona of Pospelova's philosophical reflections is not shown in an idyllic spring setting; in other words, she does not personify Creation. So, rather than serving as an immediate instrument for the glorification of a male Creator, she externalises the idyllic aspects of pastoral imagery, which she uses to illustrate her reflections. However, the traditional woman's role of embodying spiritual truth and flawless virtue eventually prevents her from finding answers which would transcend an excessively pious and moralising, one-dimensional view, thereby restoring the Sentimentalist idealisation of woman. Pospelova's female narrator experiences only fleeting unhappiness. While her insights into the ephemeral nature of human life and the moral imperfection of human nature might conjure up moments of depression, at the end of her philosophical reflections, her trust in the bliss awaiting the true believer in the afterlife always gains the upper hand. By employing a female narrative voice in

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<sup>81</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Groza', pp. 190–196.

<sup>82</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'Osen'', pp. 70–84.

<sup>83</sup> Pospelova 1801, 'lasnaia zimniaia noch'', pp. 150–160.



her philosophical essays, Pospelova's final argument, therefore, always reasserts woman's embodiment of piety and religious faith.

The Sentimentalist idealisation of woman as an angelic, dispassionate, transcendental creature forced these stereotypes on religiously-inclined female authors, leaving little room for deviation in their philosophical thoughts. While, in *The Best Hours of My Life*, Pospelova presents a mystic female narrator, the moralistic writings collected in *Some Traits of Nature and Truth* endow the narrator with saintly features. Pospelova's female protagonists adopt a behaviour which Iurii Lotman has described as 'sacrosanct' in reference to Anna Labzina.<sup>84</sup> In their writings both these women authors strive for saintly status, a position which, as Lotman argues, entails 'the sin of pride', i.e. the belief that they are entitled to judge other people's conduct. Many of Pospelova's essays contain strong warnings about the horrors which await unbelievers and the morally deficient after death. In 'A Morning Stroll', for example, she advises humans to lead a virtuous life so that they may arm themselves with a shield of patience.<sup>85</sup> The choice of word intensifies her warning's strongly moralising tone, since the shield (*shchit*), is a word associated with battle or war; the shield also occurs in the Bible, where it protects the virtuous and upright.<sup>86</sup> By lecturing others about their failure to adhere to social or religious rules, these female authors were able to subvert the Sentimentalist image of the mute, voiceless woman.

## Summary

Chapter Four has argued that the image of woman as a pious virgin and innocent country maiden is deeply rooted in Sentimentalist culture, and is reproduced in the way many critics portray Pospelova, emphasising her young age, her early death and her provincial origins. It further demonstrated Pospelova's adoption of the Sentimentalist equation of woman with nature in order to legitimise her own status as a writer, presenting her female narrator as an interpreter of Creation in emulation of Karamzin's 'A Walk'. Since Sentimentalism considers woman to be flawless and closer to natural goodness, this role is easy for a woman writer to adopt as she creates her writerly self-image. Pospelova grasped the emergence of Gothic imagery, making use

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<sup>84</sup> Iurii Lotman: *Russlands Adel. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Peter I. bis Nikolaus I.* Böhlau: Köln 1997, p. 335.

<sup>85</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Utrenniaia progulka', pp. 75–83 (p. 80).

<sup>86</sup> Ephesians 6:13–23.

of the conceptualisation of women as saints or angelic otherworldly creatures to enhance women's symbolic value.

In contrast to Karamzin, some of whose male protagonists do not epitomise innate goodness, Pospelova's women are invariably in tune with nature. In her pastorals, only man expresses his emotions, venting his grief about the absence of his beloved in abundant lyrical monologues, while woman is the mute object of his adoration. In her philosophical and religious reflections, Pospelova partly manages to revise this role, which impedes her ability to articulate conflict; she creates disharmony by contrasting the pastoral imagery of the *locus amoenus* to that of the *locus terribilis*, and by associating both with religious topics rather than the more traditional love context. However, her concluding calls of the female narrator to remain virtuous and faithful restore the Sentimentalist notion of woman as the bearer of moral integrity.

## Chapter Five

### Criticism of Sentimentalist Conventions: Mariia Bolotnikova

This chapter examines the strategies adopted by a provincial Sentimentalist woman author to justify her writerly activity, with a particular focus on Mariia Bolotnikova (dates of birth and death unknown), whose collection was first published in 1817 and has never been republished. In creating her self-image as a woman poet, she made use of Sentimentalism's elevated appreciation of nature. Also, conforming to the display of modesty expected of a woman writer, she did refer to a male mentor. Bolotnikova's work nevertheless challenges the notion of woman as a superior yet naive being who is incapable of learning her lessons. Her writings not only criticise certain aspects of Sentimentalist 'feminisation' of culture, they also challenge the Sentimentalist association of subordination with woman and nature, and provide evidence of a cultural discourse which included debates about the human rights of both serfs and, crucially, women as well.

#### Bolotnikova's life, work, and publication strategies

Very little biographical information is available on this author.<sup>1</sup> One source is Ivan Dolgorukii (1764–1832), provincial governor and himself author of some poems and comedies, who kept a social diary naming people who mattered to him. According to his diary, Bolotnikova was a married gentlewoman resident in the Orel region, some one hundred kilometres south of Moscow.<sup>2</sup> In 1817 she published a collection of poems, *Derevenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia* (The Country Lyre, or Hours of Solitude).<sup>3</sup> While we do not know to what extent she was aware of the political climate of her day, her work does display some familiarity with terms commonly used in Decembrist

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<sup>1</sup> Some topics in this chapter have been discussed in Ursula Stohler: 'Released from Her Fetters? Natural Equality in the Work of the Russian Sentimentalist Woman Writer Mariia Bolotnikova'. *Aspasia. International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 2, 2008, pp. 1–27.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Dolgorukii: 'Bolotnikova'. In: *Kapishche moego serdtsa ili slovar' vsekh tekhn lits, s koimi ia byl v raznykh otnosheniakh v techenii moei zhizni*. Imperatorskoe obshchestvo istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete: Moscow 1874, pp. 303–304 (p. 303).

Amanda Ewington mentions that Dolgorukii was the brother of the poet Princess Elizaveta Mikhailovna Dologorukova and that he was sometimes referred to as Dolgorukov also, see Ewington, Amanda (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, p. 441.

<sup>3</sup> Mariia Bolotnikova: *Derevenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia*. Tipografiia Reshetnikova: Moscow 1817.

poetry to allude to the new, hotly debated republican ideas. We may therefore assume that she was interested in such literature.

Why did Bolotnikova have her work published in Moscow? Although, in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, provincial cultural and intellectual life had been improving, Bolotnikova and other provincial women may still have found it difficult to publish their works locally. She may also have hoped for a more favourable reception of a collection published in Moscow.

Notwithstanding a discourse which associates provincial life with cultural backwardness, when creating her self-image as a woman poet, Bolotnikova employs the Sentimentalist equation of woman and nature. Playing on Sentimentalist associations of women with nature, her collection highlights the potential afforded by Sentimentalist aesthetics to prospective women authors living in more rural areas by immediately drawing the disarming picture of an innocent country maiden who lives far from civilisation's corrupting influence. In particular, Bolotnikova's epigraph to *The Country Lyre*<sup>4</sup> suggests that, like her peers, she conformed to aesthetic norms of cultural discourse in order to subvert them, using the association of woman with nature to declare herself a female poet. Here she claims that only those in direct contact with it can genuinely appreciate nature:

La nature ne se découvre  
Que dans les champs et les hameaux.  
C'est-là qu'à nos yeux elle s'ouvre  
Tandis que l'habitant du Louvre  
La voit à travers des rideaux.

L. F.

*Nature unveils herself  
Only in fields and hamlets.  
It is here that she opens herself to our eyes,  
Whereas the inhabitant of the Louvre  
Sees her through curtains.*

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<sup>4</sup> The epigraph is in French and by an author whose initials only are given.

L. F.<sup>5</sup>

Making a virtue out of necessity in employing the Sentimentalist idealisation of the countryside, Bolotnikova explains why a woman living far from the hubs of intellectual life considers becoming a writer. Her epigraph suggests that, in contrast to city dwellers, who can only observe nature indirectly, a woman living in the countryside has the unique capacity of being nature's immediate interpreter.

Even though the education of provincial noblewomen began to be taken more seriously in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of them still only enjoyed a very basic education if any, and we know nothing about Bolotnikova's literary apprenticeship.

Replete with professions of modesty and humility which say less about her education than about her desire to conform to Sentimentalist expectations of modesty in writers, the Preface to her collection opens as follows:

Решившись напечатать слабые мои творения я не имела в виду угодить ни свету, где много находится Гениев во всяком роде, ни публике отечественной, где одним великим просвещенным умам предоставлено пожинать лавры, но небольшому обществу друзей ...<sup>6</sup>

*Having decided to publish my feeble works, I did not intend to please either society, where there are many geniuses of every kind, nor the domestic public, where only great and enlightened minds are fit to earn laurels; but rather only the small society of my friends ...*<sup>7</sup>

Bolotnikova's opening conforms with the explanation expected from a woman who has decided to not just write, but to actually publish her work. In it, she reassures her readers that she has no intention of competing with established writers, but writes for like-minded friends only, who read her poems in the literary circles she has been hosting at her home. She also states that she is hoping only for her friends' approval and does not seek public recognition.

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<sup>5</sup> My translation.

<sup>6</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Predislovie', pp. i–iv.

<sup>7</sup> For a full English translation of the preface, see Ewington p. 445.

The introduction refers to the fairly informal way in which Sentimentalist literature was circulated, chiefly in domestic circles which provided women writers with an audience and feedback, also reinforcing the association, however, of female authors with dilettantism. Bolotnikova's friends could read her manuscripts at leisure. If it had indeed been her intention to offer her writings to them only, she would have had no need for publication. The result of publication was a broader readership — and a conflict with the display of modesty expected of Sentimentalist women writers. This explains why she claimed her decision to publish was due to her friends' 'forcing' (zastavliaiut) her to do so.

Bolotnikova's preface contains an explicit apology for her deficient writing style, claiming that the only instruction she had received since childhood were Dolgorukii's writings, and asking for clemency from better educated critics as they judge her poems. Her strategy somewhat resembles that of Anna Bunina, who — in advance apology for any shortcomings in her poems, and despite considerable support from a circle of respected men of letters — called one of her works *The Inexperienced Muse*.

Bolotnikova also observes Sentimentalist conventions of authorship by placing a religious poem at the beginning of her collection. 'A Prayer' (Molitva) portrays the narrator as a devout and humble woman. The fact that this is the only religious poem in the collection supports the assumption that its purpose is to signal Bolotnikova's conformity with Sentimentalist cultural norms, which conceptualised women as pious, not to say angelic, and to prevent people from associating her with self-importance, a trait considered unbecoming a woman.<sup>8</sup>

To see her work published, Bolotnikova also needed a male mentor's approval. Despite enhancements to provincial cultural life in the first two decades of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century, such a man may still have been difficult to find. Bolotnikova therefore resorts to the strategy of using a symbolic mentor, dedicating her work to Dolgorukii. She names him in her second poem, the only one which features him. 'Dan' priznatel'nosti moego serdtsa kniaziiu I.M. Dolgorukovu' (A Debt of Gratitude from My Heart to Prince I.M. Dolgorukii) reiterates the importance of his works to the development of her writing skills:

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<sup>8</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Molitva', pp. 1–3.

Как я Глафиру прочитала  
 Камин, Парфиона и авось:  
 Тогда кое-что написала,  
 Что только в мысли мне пришлось.

*I had been reading Glafira  
 Kamin, and probably Parfion:  
 And then I wrote a thing or two,  
 Whatever came into my head.*

In the course of the poem, Bolotnikova intensifies her display of respect for Dolgorukii's work, asserting at one point that his writings alone have taught her to put her gifts to good use:

Тебе обязана сим даром,  
 Твой слог способность мне развил;  
 Тебя благодарю я с жаром —  
 Ты жизнь мне нову подарил.<sup>9</sup>

*I owe this gift I have to you,  
 Your words developed my own skill;  
 I thank you most sincerely, warmly—  
 You gave the gift of a new life.<sup>10</sup>*

Although motivated by the respectable ambition to be a writer, these expressions of gratitude to Dolgorukii create an unusually intense feeling of intimacy which goes well beyond a disciple's obligations to their mentor.

More than his work, it is Dolgorukii himself who appears to have become a source of inspiration for Bolotnikova's writing. In the following stanzas she notes that he has appeared to her in her dreams during moonlit nights. Her unusually passionate words of reverence for her imaginary mentor identify him as a male muse.

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<sup>9</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Dan' priznatel'nosti moego serdtsa kniazui I.M. Dolgorukovu', pp. 4–8 (p. 5).

<sup>10</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Since the primary purpose of the poem was to express conformity with Sentimentalist conventions of female authorship to enable her to publish her works, it is unlikely that Bolotnikova consciously intended to reverse the traditional gender pattern of male poet and female source of inspiration. Doing so would have created a serious conflict with the Sentimentalist image of women as passive and virtuous beings. However, Bolotnikova's homage to a male authority lacks the subtlety one might have expected from a Sentimentalist woman poet.

By paying lip service, at the beginning of her work, to notions of female modesty and female respect for religion and the patriarchal social order, Bolotnikova adopts strategies similar to those employed by women writers before her. Anna Volkova, for example, opened her *Stikhotvoreniia* (Poems, 1807) with numerous odes to the royal family; almost a third of the poems in her collection are panegyric, intended to attract patronage. As we have seen, Mariia Pospelova also placed several odes to the royal family at the beginning of her first collection, *Luchshie chasy zhizni moei* (The Best Hours of My Life, 1798), followed by religious poems. Almost a third of Pospelova's work consists of poems which express respect for the existing order.<sup>11</sup>

While Bolotnikova attempts to conform to Sentimentalist conventions of female authorship by paying homage to a male author, her decision to choose a mentor without requesting his prior permission nevertheless undermines the Sentimentalist notion of female humility she has been trying to project. She further challenges the notion by sending Dolgorukii a copy of her work, which he had not seen before. Her gesture initiates a correspondence over a period during which the two never actually met in person. In his autobiography, *Kapishche moego serdtsa* (The Temple of My Heart), Dolgorukii reveals that he was irritated by Bolotnikova's approach, whose poems he considered to be mediocre at best, and claims to have replied to her letters only as a matter of courtesy. In his eyes, a woman addressing a man in as direct a manner as Bolotnikova was impertinent. But when he finally met her in person during one of her visits to Moscow, he was surprised to find someone quite different from the image her letters had conjured up in his mind:

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<sup>11</sup> Anna Volkova: *Stikhotvoreniia*. Morskaia Tipografiia: St Petersburg 1807; Mariia Pospelova: *Luchshie chasy zhizni moei*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Vladimir 1798.



... нашел даму скромную, тихую, застенчивую даже, и с трудом мог понять, каким образом, будучи благоразумна, она так свободно приняла на себя звание автора, с которым кажется вовсе не сладит.<sup>12</sup>

*...I found a modest, quiet, even shy woman, and found it difficult to understand how, being a sensible woman, she could so freely take on the title of author, which seemed not at all to suit her.*<sup>13</sup>

The passage reveals an evident clash between the Sentimentalist notion of female modesty and Bolotnikova's determination to become a writer.

A further difficulty encountered by provincial women aspiring to be writers were the great distances from any cultural institutions. As Irina Savkina argues, and as outlined in Chapter Two, not every provincial woman had access to the intellectual stimulus of cultural circles. Savkina calls such women *provintsialki*, highlighting their status as outsiders in a double sense. Bolotnikova would have belonged to this category. To some extent she did benefit from the importance Sentimentalism ascribed to reading and education, increasingly so for women. Bolotnikova seems to occasionally have visited Moscow, which may have allowed her to buy reading materials.

Since she sold her work by subscription, we may assume that she read journals and magazines, some of which, including *Damskii zhurnal* (The Ladies' Magazine, 1806–1816), *Aglaia* (1808–1812), *Kabinet Aspazii* (Aspasia's Cabinet, 1815), *Modnyi vestnik* (The Fashion Messenger, 1816), and *Vseobshchii modnyi zhurnal* (General Fashion Magazine, 1817), featured many contributions by women, as outlined in Chapter Two. Such magazines may have inspired Bolotnikova's own literary endeavours.

As becomes clear from an account of a literary evening at Dolgorukii's Moscow home to which Bolotnikova was invited, it seems to have been difficult for her, however, to participate in established literary institutions and to be in touch with other people interested in literature. According to this account, she was mocked by

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<sup>12</sup> Dolgorukii, p. 304.

<sup>13</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

the president, who welcomed her as an honorary member, requesting her to join the other members at their table. The farce made fun of Bolotnikova for being an unknown woman poet — and a provincial one to boot.<sup>14</sup> As the example illustrates, men struggled to accommodate provincial women writers in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The high esteem of woman and the countryside professed by male authors bore little resemblance to actual reality.

Apart from the poem dedicated to Dolgorukii and the prayer which open Bolotnikova's collection, her other poems either express regret about the insincerity of people and about the absence of friends, or deliberately attack certain Sentimentalist values. Among the poems in which the narrator laments the insincerity of people are 'Roza, Fialka i Amarant, ili nevinnost' uvlechennaia v seti' (Rose, Violet, and Amaranth, or Innocence Ensnared) and 'Nyneshnii svet' (Today's World). 'Rose, Violet, and Amaranth' addresses salon intrigues and will be discussed in greater detail below; in 'Today's World' the narrator deplores social hypocrisy.

The second group of poems consists of elegies in which the narrator laments the absence of a (true) friend. In 'Nachertanie gorestnykh myslei o razluke s K-neiu A. P. Z-noi' (An Outline of Sorrowful Thoughts on the Separation from Princess A. P. Z-naya), for instance, the narrator remembers the happy hours spent with her visitor, and expresses sadness about their separation. Adapting the Sentimentalist cult of friendship to the pastoral, in which a male shepherd expresses his grief about his beloved shepherdess' absence, Bolotnikova makes her narrator declare that she cannot find happiness while her friend continues to live in a distant country. Similarly, the narrator in 'Vospominanie' (Recollection) cannot appreciate the idyllic beauty of nature around her because it reminds her of moments spent in the company of her now distant friend. In the monologue, 'Poslanie k Anete' (Epistle to Aneta), the narrator imagines the idyllic country life she would lead if she could share it with a true friend, cultivating a flower garden and being as faithful as a pair of doves to one another — an image which was probably inspired by one of Salomon Gessner's works.

The third category of poems in Bolotnikova's work questions or addresses specific elements of Sentimentalist discourse, including the cult of feminisation, the equality of the sexes, and the situation of the serfs. The main focus of my study is on

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<sup>14</sup> N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzheniia. Pervaia polovina XIX veka*. Academia: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, pp. 116–118.

this category, which includes 'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoret'skago' (My Butler's Thoughts), 'Uprek mushchinam' (A Reproach to Men), and 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam' (A Response to an Epistle to Women). The order of the poems in the collection is interesting. In what may be an attempt to soften the general impact of the collection, the more radical poems are interspersed with elegiac poems; the two poems which criticise the hypocrisy of salon life are also placed far from each other. The result is a balance between poems more in tune, and others more at odds with Sentimentalist fashion.<sup>15</sup>

Before embarking on an analysis of Bolotnikova's socio-political poems, I briefly wish to discuss the topics of nature, culture and gender in her poem 'Rose, Violet and Amaranth', which combines Sentimentalism's equation of woman with nature and innate goodness with the love intrigues of salon life, testifying to the growing importance of provincial salons. Violet, an innocent country flower, has been moved to the unknown and artificial world of a flower-bed, where the beautiful and confident Rose falsely promises her friendship, encouraging Violet to confess her feelings to handsome Amaranth. For a while the union looks promising, but Rose eventually draws Amaranth's attention to another flower, the yellow Lily. A newcomer to the intrigues of courtship and salon life, Violet is inconsolable. In this allegory, woman does not embody everlasting friendship and happiness, as she does in Pospelova's work. Rose is corrupt; Violet's innate goodness brings her sorrow rather than happiness. The poem's portrayal of the clash between the ideal and real worlds challenges the notion that people raised far from civilisation might become happier than sophisticates who can see through dishonest intentions.<sup>16</sup>

### **'A Reproach to Men'**

As has been mentioned, many of Bolotnikova's poems are sentimental elegies, descriptions of the countryside and wistful memories of moments spent there with friends. In other poems, however, Bolotnikova expresses criticism of the prevailing

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<sup>15</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Roza, Fialka i Amarant, ili nevinnost' uvlechennaia v seti', pp. 8–17;

'Nyneshnii svet', pp. 44–46;

'Nachertanie gorestnykh myslei o razluke s K-neiu A.P. Z-noi', pp. 23–26;

'Vospominanie', pp. 31–33; 'Poslanie k Anete', 37–41;

'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoret'skago', pp. 18–22;

'Uprek mushchinam', pp. 29–30; 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 52–55.

<sup>16</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Roza, Fialka i Amarant, ili nevinnost' uvlechennaia v seti', pp. 8–17.

social situation. 'A Reproach to Men' fiercely attacks the existing patriarchal order.<sup>17</sup>

Prevented from expressing overt criticism in a political pamphlet, for example, by the Sentimentalist view of women as sources of beauty and virtue, Bolotnikova couches her message in poetic form: in terms borrowed from the domain of civil rights, 'A Reproach to Men' reproduces aspects of the cultural climate which has encouraged the spread of the idea of unconditional, equal human rights. The poem opens with a straightforward question as the narrator demands evidence for any kind of offence women may have committed:

Какое преступление  
Соделал женский пол,  
Что вечно в заключеньи  
Он страждет от оков? — <sup>18</sup>

*What misdemeanour can it be  
The female sex committed,  
That means for all eternity  
We're shackled and imprisoned?*<sup>19</sup>

In Bolotnikova's view, political discrimination against women lacks any foundation whatsoever. Her initial question implies that she will refuse any arguments which attempt to justify women's social inequality by their role in Christian mythology: Original sin, and the concept of women as the principal guilty party, are foreign to her argument. Both 'prestuplen'e' (crime; rendered as 'misdemeanour' in the English translation of the poem) and 'zakon' (law), a term which occurs later, are legal terms. These references to jurisprudence, one of the administrative tools of a civil state, underline Sentimentalism's democratic potential, which Bolotnikova adapts to the situation of women.

In 'A Reproach to Men' Bolotnikova does not deny that sexual difference may determine gender roles, accepting that it is natural for each sex to play its own part in

<sup>17</sup> The entire poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Alexandra Murzina also addresses this topic.

<sup>18</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Uprek mushchinam', pp. 29–30 (p. 29).

<sup>19</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

social relations. She hints at this when declaring that men, deemed physically stronger than women, should protect and cherish women. Here, Bolotnikova reproduces the contemporary image of women as fragile beings in need of male protection common in Russia (as well as Europe):

Природа сотворила  
Защитниками вас,  
И вам определила,  
Покоить только нас.

*What nature had in mind was that  
You'd turn into defenders,  
In her design she meant for you  
To care for us alone.*

However, she also deplores the oppression of women resulting from this physical inequality. Just like other thinkers of her time, she locates the reason for the oppression of women in man's 'natural' physical superiority. Her poem denounces the unnatural subordination of women, which contradicts the basic laws of nature which govern relationships between men and women:

Пристрастно же толкуя  
Ея святой закон,  
Над нами торжествуя  
Вы заглушаете нам стон.

*You twist the meaning that you find  
Writ in her sacred law;  
You sense your triumph over us  
And stifle all our cries.*

The lyrical persona criticises the fact that sexual difference has become a reason for social discrimination. Bolotnikova highlights the gravity of the offence by adding the

epithet 'sacred' (sviatoi), suggesting that men's behaviour is blasphemous. When criticising men for failing to respect the laws created by nature, where there is no social discrimination between the sexes, the author explicitly associates nature with the female. Calling her a mother, she attributes to Nature the role of a supreme female entity which has created the fundamental laws which govern relationships between the sexes:

Природа — мать правдива;  
Ко всем она равна.

*As a mother, nature's fair,  
She treats us equally,*

Using Sentimentalism's elevated view of nature, Bolotnikova makes her point about the natural equality of the sexes, questioning the 'sexual contract', to use Carole Pateman's term. In Bolotnikova's work, nature stands for authority, whereas in Sentimentalist literature it is typically conceptualised as an element which may be praised but must nevertheless be transcended. This is true for works by both male and female writers. Karamzin's *Bednaia Liza* (Poor Liza) represents woman as having a high affinity to nature; nevertheless, her material interests are eventually considered to be of lesser importance than the protagonist's. In its description of the earth enduring the attacks of a storm, Mariia and Elizaveta Moskvina's poem 'Buriia' (The Storm) associates nature with subordination, as outlined in Chapter Two.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Pospelova regards nature as the daughter of an omnipotent male creator. Her poems reproduce a passive image of nature which reflects the universal order created by God. Woman and nature are perceived to be subordinate to man and culture.

The way in which Bolotnikova associates nature with authority rather than subordination suggests that she has re-conceptualised some aspects of Sentimentalist discourse, such as the high regard for nature, using Sentimentalism's fascination with nature to question social inequality between men and women. Her representation of Mother Nature as an influential legal entity — the female connotation of nature

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<sup>20</sup> Mariia Moskvina / Elizaveta Moskvina: *Aoniia ili sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Universitetskaia tipografiia: Moscow 1802. 'Buriia', p. 27.

symbolising authority rather than subordination — challenges common Sentimentalist notions, overthrowing the patriarchal hierarchy of man and culture ruling over nature and woman.

The lyrical persona in 'A Reproach to Men' further accuses men of having usurped creativity for themselves, criticising the passive role assigned to women:

Почто же мысль кичлива

К вам в голову взошла,

Что будто бы возможно

Одним вам чудеса творить? —

Но нам зачто же должно

Капризы переносить?

*How can it be you've come to think*

*Such arrogant thoughts as these?*

*How could it be the case that you*

*Alone work miracles?*

*And why is it we have to bear*

*The brunt of your caprice?*

The criticism articulated here challenges Karamzin's concept of writing, according to which it was women's main function to inspire, but not to create, poetry. It is a view clearly expressed, for instance, in his 'Poslanie k zhenshchinam' (Epistle to Women, 1795). As Wendy Rosslyn observes, one stanza compares women to the moon, which 'has no light of its own and only reflects the sun'.<sup>21</sup> Bolotnikova's accusation in 'A Reproach to Men' exposes the Sentimentalist notion of authorship which regards women as Creation's innately good and spiritually pure but empty vessels merely able to reflect their natural environment. In particular, it subverts the notion that any

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<sup>21</sup> Wendy Rosslyn: *Anna Bunina (1774–1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry in Russia*. Mellen: Lewiston 1997, p. 31.

literary work inevitably reflects the will of a male God, and that the female author's creative energy cannot engender literary output.

### **'An Answer to an Epistle to Women'**

'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam' (An Answer to an Epistle to Women) also represents a divergence from Bolotnikova's considerable number of elegiac poems. It is a socio-critical poem which challenges some aspects of the Sentimentalist cult of femininity. The title indicates that the author is replying to a letter from someone she does not name. In a footnote to the title, Bolotnikova explains that the poem is a response to an unpublished epistle whose first two lines she provides, and whose author she calls 'G. Sochinitel'' (Mr. Author):

Г. Сочинитель еще не издал в свет своего творения под заглавием:

Послание к женщинам. В сем послании видеть можно лесть

в высшей степени. Оно начинается так:

Женщин милых в свет рожденье

Есть награда от богов и проч.

*The author has not yet published his work entitled 'Epistle to Women'. In that epistle is found the highest degree of flattery. It starts thus:*

*Birth of gentle women on earth*

*Is a gift from the gods. (And so on)<sup>22</sup>*

While 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' may well have been Bolotnikova's response to a poem received in private correspondence, the title closely echoes Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women' (1796, re-published in 1803 and 1814), three years prior to the publication of her own work, and she may well have read Karamzin's poem in its 1814

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<sup>22</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 52–55. This poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.  
Translation by Emily Lygo.



edition.<sup>23</sup> Her reason for using the pseudonym 'Mr. Author' may have been to avoid direct confrontation with a renowned author, which would have been considered unseemly in a woman. Presumably for the same reason, Bolotnikova's footnote does not give a verbatim quote from the passage in Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women'. However, both it and the text she does quote represent women as objects of adoration.

Alternatively, Bolotnikova may have invented the epistle in question, in which case her aim would have been not so much a polemic based on one specific poem than to challenge an entire value system, including the Sentimentalist elevation of women. Bolotnikova's poem attacks many of the values supported by Karamzin. It criticises a culture which claimed to be particularly attentive to women's concerns but actually did very little of the kind. Bolotnikova uses the lines she quotes to voice her criticism more sharply. Her poem begins like this:

Когда бы все так почитали  
Наградой женщин от небес;  
То меньше б в свете мы страдали  
И каждый свой имел бы вес.

*If everyone was of the mind  
That women are a gift from God,  
We'd suffer less while on this earth,  
And have our own authority.*

Bolotnikova's use of the conditional 'If' (Kogda by) at the beginning underscores the hypothetical nature of Karamzin's programme, exposing literature's proclaimed elevated regard for women as a sham. In her wish that '[we] have our own authority', her narrator calls for a world of gender equality.

The poem continues with the exclamation that boundless happiness would reign if men only respected women as much as they claim to do; several Sentimentalist clichés of femininity follow, reproducing Sentimentalist man's protestations of how

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<sup>23</sup> Nikolai Karamzin: *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Iurii Lotman (ed.). Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1966, p. 391.

greatly he honours women, how they are the centre of all his attention, and what an elevated place they occupy in his world:

Так! женщину считают  
 Рулеткой на земном шару;  
 Сего дня дерзостно ругают,  
 А завтра вознесут — в жару —

В жару и Олтари нам строят,  
 Названье Ангелов дают;  
 Клянутся, в страсти пылкой ноят,  
 Источник даже слез лият.

*Yes! Now they think of women like  
 A roulette wheel upon this earth.  
 One day they curse them brazenly,  
 Then elevate them, gripped by ardour.*

*In ardour they build altars to us,  
 They call us by the name of Angel;  
 They swear, they moan in fiery passion,  
 Even weep a flood of tears.*

Men are accused of hypocrisy because their declarations of pure reverence for women are untrue. The symbolic elevation of women, Bolotnikova argues, has failed to produce human relationships based on mutual esteem. Although men assert that they adore women even more than angels, their behaviour is inconsistent:

Но лишь подунул ветерочик:  
 Погас огонь уж страстный весь,  
 Как будто резвой матылиочек,  
 В долине скрылся и исчез. —

*It only takes a wind to blow:  
The flame of passion's soon put out,  
As though a playful moth flew by  
Hid in a valley, disappeared.*

'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' highlights the failure of Sentimentalism to create a new type of man who understands and can empathise with women, which would result in a culture in which women enjoy greater social power. In contrast with the gentle tone and idealising tendencies of Karamzin's epistle, Bolotnikova's poem is angry and disillusioned, characteristics at odds with the Sentimentalist view of women.

For all its criticism of the failed feminisation of culture, Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' did support the elevated Sentimentalist appreciation of the private sphere with its corresponding ideal of domestic happiness. As mentioned in Chapter One, many women welcomed the shift in focus from the public to the private sphere stipulated by Sentimentalist discourse, which gave meaning to their chief domain of life even if it effectively excluded them from public influence. In parts of Karamzin's 'An Epistle to Women', the male narrator defends this view by declaring that he has turned his back on the pursuit of public rewards, preferring to spend time in the company of kind-hearted women instead. It is a view likewise endorsed by Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women', which asks men to abandon the pursuit of worldly vanities such as wealth and rank, and to focus on their domestic lives. The poem claims that life will become an earthly paradise if men's main concern is to please their beloved:

В объятиях супруги милой,  
В кругу малюточек своих,  
Где можно жить лишь дружбы силой  
И исполнять свой долг для них.

*It's in the arms of your beloved,  
Encircled by your little ones,*

*Where you live on the strength of friendship,  
Do your duty for them all.*

Unlike Karamzin's 'An Epistle to Women', however, Bolotnikova's poem expresses regret that this ideal is a far cry from reality.

Men's behaviour in marriage and courtship is an important topic in Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women'. While supporting Karamzin's opinion that marriage should be based on natural inclinations and on the spouses' faithfulness to each other, it also criticises men's courtship behaviour like that of a 'playful moth'. Bolotnikova revises and reassigns the metaphor of the moth or butterfly, which has commonly been associated to women, by applying it to male caprice and fickleness.

'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' challenges the patriarchal view of conjugal life upheld in some of Karamzin's writings. Despite certain progressive features displayed in some parts of 'An Epistle to Women', other writings of his also suggest that he wanted to conserve a patriarchal social order, both in the private and in the public realms, even opting for the extension of patriarchal rights to society as a whole. For example, as Andreas Schönle has pointed out, Karamzin relates an incident in a Swiss village in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, where the narrator encourages the locals to deal with a young criminal as a father would if he had to punish his own child. To use Schönle's words, public life becomes a 'semiprivate patriarchal sphere'.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' suggests that it is the 'the strength of friendship' (lish' druzhby siloi) which brings about domestic happiness. In this regard, her poem celebrates equality within the private sphere, questioning the sexual contract which persists in the work by writers such as Karamzin. Her attitude more closely resembles that of Radishchev, who expressed his criticism of serfdom in Russia in *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (Journey from Petersburg to Moscow). As Joe Andrew argues without necessarily including the

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<sup>24</sup> Andreas Schönle: 'The Scare of the Self'. *Slavic Review*, 57 (4), 1998, pp. 723–746 (especially pp. 736–737).

relationship between spouses, Radishchev regarded mutual respect rather than patriarchal prerogatives as the natural regulators within the family.<sup>25</sup>

Going a step further, Bolotnikova explicitly extends the concept of friendship to include the married couple, perhaps inspired by the egalitarian ideals which circulated during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, when many aristocrats questioned the autocratic political order, the institution of serfdom, and the social inequality of women. Bolotnikova applies these egalitarian principles in her call for a relationship between spouses which makes the wife a companion and moral equal to her husband. In doing so, Bolotnikova uses the democratic potential inherent in the concept of friendship, a concept which seriously questions the Russian family's traditional hierarchical structure, to elevate the standing of women in the private sphere.

In 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women', Bolotnikova makes some allusions to the prevalent Sentimentalist image of women as credulous creatures in literary works such as Karamzin's *Poor Liza*. For example, she asserts that if a naive and innocent young woman believes the words of a fickle man, she will suffer endless misery:

Но коль невинная решится  
Коварным сим словам внимать;  
Пошла страдать, пошла крушиться,  
Конца печалям не видать! —

*And if the innocent girl decides  
To listen to these cunning words,  
She's doomed to suffer, doomed to grieve,  
She'll never see an end to woes.*

Bolotnikova's description of the fate of a fallen girl attacks men for their irresponsible and heartless behaviour. Her narrator strongly disapproves of dandies who regard courting as a game to bolster male self-esteem. She suggests that men should stop viewing women as objects of desire, instead treating them with respect. She calls on

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<sup>25</sup> Joe Andrew: 'Radical Sentimentalism or Sentimental Radicalism? A Feminist Approach to Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature'. In: Kelly, Catriona et al. (eds): *Discontinuous Discourses in Modern Russian Literature*. Macmillan: London 1989, pp. 136–156.

men to practice the Sentimentalist topos of sincerity and to be sincere not only when pouring the stirrings of their soul into a literary work, but also when dealing with real women.

Bolotnikova's work takes at face value and transfers into real life the Sentimentalist notion of psychological introspection. Unlike Sentimentalist writers such as Karamzin, her motivation is to produce changes in relations between the sexes rather than to depict the painful results of a failed romance. At the end of 'A Response to an Epistle to Women', in a deliberate effort to revise the image of the naive and innocent girl doomed to misery she had conjured up in her poem, 'Rose, Violet and Amaranth', Bolotnikova issues a warning to men and women alike:

Огнем кто больно обожжется,  
Тот будет дуть и на людей. —

*If you're badly burned by fire,  
You'll start to blow on other people.*

The corresponding English proverb, 'Once bitten, twice shy', uses different imagery to illustrate the same situation. The lines in Bolotnikova's poem are a variation on a Russian proverb:

Ожѣгшись на молоке, будешь дуть и на воду.

*[People who have been] scalded by milk [will] blow on water.*

Bolotnikova substitutes 'people' for 'milk' or 'water', emphasising the fact that precautionary measures are made necessary by misbehaving individuals. Her variation on the proverb challenges the Sentimentalist image of the credulous and naive girl. She asserts that women are capable of learning from bad experiences and will stop falling for insincere promises. The poem revises the model typified in Karamzin's *Poor Liza* of the desperate young girl who commits suicide when she finds out that she has been betrayed.

### **'The Dog and the Lamb'**

Bolotnikova's fable, 'Sobaka i iagnenok' (The Dog and the Lamb), is the final poem in the collection.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to her elegiac poems, the fable contains a socio-critical element and, in this regard, resembles other poems analysed in this chapter. A hungry dog scours an idyllic landscape in search of food, here an unusual vegetarian mixture of grass and hay. The narrator expresses astonishment to be living in a time when dogs want to eat food usually consumed only by horses, cows, and lambs. No sooner does the dog become aware of a lamb grazing peacefully nearby than it attacks and almost kills the herbivore, releasing it at the last moment and warning it never again to eat 'dog food'. The narrator concludes by observing that dogs are evil because they deprive lambs of their fodder even though they are not interested in eating it themselves.

The dog's aggressive behaviour is a traditionally male characteristic. The lamb's innocence and defencelessness, on the other hand, is associated with the frailty, gentleness and meekness ascribed to women in a patriarchal culture, and evoking Christ and Christian doctrine. Projecting them onto women, Sentimentalism accords particular importance to these values.

The fable signals the incipient decline of the trend towards the 'feminisation' of culture at the time of writing. The trend was superseded by Romantic ideals and revolutionary projects, which required their male literary characters to display more masculine features. Describing male attempts at 'feminisation' as a ridiculous and malicious charade, it can be read as an allegory of the tendency of Sentimentalist man to 'feminise' himself, and can also be interpreted as an allegory about male and female spheres of existence. The male invades a territory which was idyllic before he disturbed it with an activity which runs against his nature. It may be the dog's duty to guard the lambs, not to attack them for their natural grazing behaviour. The male's decision to obtain a type of food unsuitable to him does not make sense; it is an artificial act that threatens the female, disrupting the natural order of things.

It is unlikely for Bolotnikova to be arguing for a social system which keeps men and women apart to such an extent that interaction becomes impossible. Given that

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<sup>26</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Sobaka i iagnenok', pp. 58–60. This poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

the dog in her fable cannot really enjoy herbivore food, her fable criticises thoughtless male incursion into the domain of women. Male aspirations to appropriate what is foreign to male nature are represented as an act of aggression, one which occurs under the guise of 'feminisation'. Despite men's claims to have become 'feminised' during the Sentimentalist era, women may still not assume positions of public authority. Bolotnikova's fable suggests that men have access to a domain which belongs to women, whereas women cannot escape the social role assigned to them.

### **'My Butler's Thoughts'**

Another one of a few socio-political poems in Bolotnikova's collection, 'My Butler's Thoughts' focuses on the Sentimentalist woman reader.<sup>27</sup> The poem suggests that Russian noblewomen were expected to take good care of their estates, instructing their stewards and managing estate affairs, and that — if and when they failed to do so — they met with disapproval. The poem also illustrates the conflict between female Russian estate managers and the Sentimentalist ideal which favours female domesticity, preferring women to be engaged in personal pursuits away from the public sphere.

Here Bolotnikova adopts some elements from contemporary drama, including a butler who, in his soliloquy, disapproves of his mistress' interest in reading so great that she forgets to manage her estate. As has been described in Chapter Two, the butler frequently appears in contemporary comic opera, often in an interlude, to comment on the behaviour of his superiors before the main action of the play resumes. The illusion of a play in Bolotnikova's poem is reinforced by the fact that the butler addresses the reader in direct speech.

Bolotnikova's intention in using such dramatic elements may have been to evoke the image of an avid female consumer of Sentimentalist literature reading in front of imaginary spectators. The poem opens with the butler's remark that his mistress spends her nights reading:

Скоро свечка так сгорает?

Ванька, слышу я, спросил;

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<sup>27</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoret'skago', pp. 18–22. The entire poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix. Translation by Emily Lygo.



Видно барыня читает  
Всё Глафиру и Камин.

*Will the candle burn down soon,  
I heard how Vanka asked,  
Her ladyship must still be reading  
Glafira and Kamin.*

Using a device which reproduces a Sentimentalist stereotype and imposes self-critical distance, the opening puts the poem's female reader on a stage, where the audience sees her through the butler's eyes. The poem also reflects on the image of the female reader: Bolotnikova revises the cliché of woman as a passive consumer of literature who merely absorbs other people's productions, presenting us instead with the image of a woman capable of standing her ground outside the Sentimentalist female paradigm.

The image of the woman reader provides the frame for the butler's further reflections on the tasks assigned to the serfs of the estate while his mistress spends her time idly reading Sentimentalist books.

Bolotnikova's 'My Butler's Thoughts' is a woman's contribution to a new literary approach. During the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the character of the serf began to eclipse the pastoral characters of the shepherd and the agricultural worker (see Chapter Two); literary focus began to shift on workers and their lives, and on the relationships between them and their masters.

Like his literary predecessor, the butler in Bolotnikova's poem lists the numerous daily tasks expected of him and the other household and estate serfs. They are busy reaping and threshing the corn and ploughing the fields. The cook is constantly busy preparing meals, of up to a dozen dishes, and never has a single day off from his hectic job. Meanwhile, their mistress does nothing but read books and, like other landowners, leads a perfectly carefree life: tea is brought to her upon waking; breakfast is ready no sooner than she gets up; the luxury of drinking imported wine at lunch-time is commonplace. Landowners indulge in the kind of idle life for which the pastoral used to criticise corrupt town-dwellers. Domestic servants such as the butler worry continually that other serfs might break something or steal it from the

household; all serfs live in fear of being beaten by their masters. In the evening the serfs are exhausted and are glad to go to bed early. Unlike their mistress, they do not have the time to indulge in reading or other leisure activities.

Unlike Bunina, whose pastorals feature shepherdesses feasting on bread and milk, Bolotnikova describes nature in more realistic terms, including peasants subsisting on bland cabbage soup and dark bread, transforming the pastoral's *locus amoenus* into a harsh, unforgiving place.

What inspired Bolotnikova's 'My Butler's Thoughts' and, in particular, her use of the character of the butler? His complaints about the year-long hard work expected of the serfs resemble those of similar characters in Ivan Khemnitser's fables and comic operas by Mikhail Popov or Nikolai L'vov (see Chapter Two). May we infer that she occasionally attended opera performances and may not have led quite as secluded a life as her authorial self-representation claims?<sup>28</sup> Very little is known about the extent of her contacts in major cities; the fact that she published her work in Moscow and attended a literary evening presided by Dolgorukii does not provide sufficient evidence of her involvement in urban cultural circles.

'My Butler's Thoughts' may also have been inspired by poems critical of serfdom published in contemporary journals, which underscore peasants' ceaseless work and the fact that they were forced to labour more for others than for themselves and were allowed no leisure time.

Bolotnikova's innovative contribution to this literary trend consists in her combination of the topos of the serf with that of the woman reader. Not only does her poem represent the mistress of the house rather than the master usually portrayed in this type of literature, she also shows her female protagonist in a then typical occupation, i.e. the reading of Sentimentalist novels.

Although it highlights the effects of a social system based on serfdom, the seemingly progressive surface of Bolotnikova's 'My Butler's Thoughts' conceals a conservative message.<sup>29</sup> Here, compassion plays an important role since it was a fundamental element in Sentimentalist ethics, and its effects were both beneficial and detrimental for underprivileged members of society. As outlined in Chapter Two, while compassion drew attention to the life of social groups other than the ruling class, it

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<sup>28</sup> I am indebted to Elena Kukushkina from *Pushkinskii Dom* in St Petersburg for drawing my attention to this possibility.

<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to A. Zorin from University of Oxford for drawing my attention to this perspective.

also served to assuage the guilty conscience of those in power, thereby impeding social change. Bolotnikova may well draw the reader's attention to the serfs' many and exhausting tasks, but she does not call for a fundamental change in the social power relations between landowner and serf. If the butler's main complaint is about the fact that his mistress spends her time idly reading, he does not question the clearly-defined traditional roles of the master and mistress of an estate, which he outlines as follows:

Говорят, что не читали  
В старину-то Господа;  
А их хлеб, соль все знавали,  
Но не та теперь пора.

Все в Поэзию пустились;  
Звезды все хотят считать;  
Мнят, что очень просветились,  
А хозяйство? — не им знать!

*They say that in the olden days  
The masters never read,  
We knew they'd share their bread and salt,  
But now those days are passed.*

*It's all been lost to poetry,  
They're all off counting stars,  
It seems as though they're now much wiser,  
But run the farm? No chance.*

The butler accepts — maintains, even — the traditional social hierarchy, protesting only against the fact that his mistress does not live up to her expected role. In his view, every human being has his or her place in society, and should act accordingly. He does not aspire to a higher standing, quite the reverse: he wants to keep his traditional place. Its ostensible social criticism notwithstanding, Bolotnikova's 'My Butler's

Thoughts' upholds the traditional social order. Like her contemporaries, Bolotnikova refrains from questioning existing power relations too fundamentally. Rather, her poem can be interpreted as an expression of the guilt which plagued the privileged classes, including women writers, readers, and estate managers.

### Summary

In this chapter I have drawn attention to an author who, as a provincial woman (Savkina uses the word 'provintsialka'), was doubly marginalised, both as a female writer and as a woman living in the provinces. Bolotnikova's image of salon culture is strongly influenced by the Sentimentalist topos of human insincerity. This makes it difficult to assume that she would have been a frequent presence at any salon.

In creating her self-image as an author, Bolotnikova employs the Sentimentalist elevation of woman and nature, adapting them to the provincial woman poet. In order to achieve publication of her works, she declares that her works are not intended for a wider audience and bestowing the role of (symbolic) mentor on Dolgorukii, thereby ostensibly conforming to conventional Sentimentalist modesty. In her approach, and in the way in which she refers to Dolgorukii in a poem dedicated to him, she nevertheless oversteps a woman writer's boundaries. Most of Bolotnikova's poems address an important element of Sentimentalist discourse, i.e. the cult of friendship, a theme she combines with the pattern of the elegy, in which a man usually deplores the absence of his beloved, or being rejected by her.

The main focus of this chapter has been on the poems in which Bolotnikova voices criticism of some of the socio-political problems which were being discussed more intensely during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, including the unconditional value of all human beings, the high importance of the notion of femininity, and the situation of the serfs. Bolotnikova exploits Sentimentalism's inherent democratic potential in order to question social inequality between men and women, using vocabulary inspired by the political climate of her time, for instance comparing a woman to a prisoner.

Some of Bolotnikova's other poems question the Sentimentalist 'feminisation' of culture. Her narrator disapproves of the high praise of femininity while women continue to be considered men's social inferiors. In particular, she dissociates herself

from the Sentimentalist image of women as emotional creatures unable to learn from experience. In presenting nature as an authoritative mother who creates laws about the equality of the sexes, she also challenges the Sentimentalist association of woman and nature with subordination.

Finally, Bolotnikova's work features the topos of the serf who complains about his situation. While it can be found in many fables and comic operas at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is Bolotnikova's innovation to combine it with the image of the Sentimentalist woman reader. In giving a voice to the serf without fundamentally questioning his social position, Bolotnikova imitates the superficial criticism of serfdom found in numerous contemporary authors.

Bolotnikova's remoteness from cultural centres was certainly a disadvantage in her endeavours to achieve acceptance as a writer. I would argue, however, that it was chiefly her lack of contact with established literary institutions which gave her the freedom to raise such unconventional and challenging topics as the social oppression of women, or the hypocritical praise of women and femininity by Sentimentalist men. It is unlikely that a poem such as 'A Reproach to Men' would have been read at a convention of *Beseda liubitelei rossiskogo sloga*, the Society of Lovers of the Russian Word, or that Anna Volkova could have written 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' under her father's tutelage.

Albeit minor, Bolotnikova's criticism of the (sexual) discrimination which shaped her culture is an important early step towards the creation of awareness of social and gender inequality in Russia.

## Chapter Six

### Revisions of Sentimentalist Gender Concepts: Anna Naumova

This chapter explores the metaphors which Sentimentalism's connotation of poetry with the feminine offered a woman author in order to justify her activity as a writer. The focus is on the literary and socio-political activity of Anna Naumova (c.1787–1862), a woman writer who lived near Kazan, a city some seven-hundred kilometres east of Moscow, and who witnessed many of the city's socio-political events. My analysis of her work will argue that by endorsing Sentimentalism's conception of women as bearers of virtue, for example by referring to components of an idyllic landscape, she was able to enter the public sphere of authorship without overtly conflicting with gender expectations. I will further suggest that the guise of the morally superior being enabled her to speak out against various Sentimentalist clichés about women, such as the image and function of the country maiden in the pastoral, or the notion that women could not overcome emotional grief. Rather than embodying the harmonious and vulnerable female demanded by Sentimentalist discourse, many of Naumova's female literary characters are endowed with an authority which allows them to be in charge of their lives. This revision of Sentimentalism's characterisation of women manifests itself particularly strongly in Naumova's portrayal of Fate as an outspoken character, and in her advice to women to act on the basis of rational thinking rather than emotional impulses.

#### Biographical background

Naumova grew up during the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Her precise year of birth is unknown; only the year of her death is documented. The author of an article about her, M.A. Vasil'ev, refers to an epistle by Naumova, written in 1819, in which the narrator says that she had already entered her thirty-second year. Vasil'ev therefore assumes the year of Naumova's birth to have been 1787, two years prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution. If this assumption is correct, Naumova would have been some nine years old when Catharine the Great (1729–1796) died. The ensuing

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<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted to Professor Wendy Rosslyn for drawing my attention to Anna Naumova at a very early stage of this study. As it developed further, Rosslyn made numerous suggestions on improvements to the chapter on Naumova, and pointed me to further important sources, including M.A. Vasil'ev: 'A.A. Naumova v obshchestvennykh motivakh ee tvorchestva'. In: [n.ed.]: *Izvestiia Obshchestva Arkheologii, Istorii i Etnografii pri Kazanskom Gosudarstvennom Universitete*. Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet: Kazan' 1926, pp. 149–174 (pp. 149–150).

authoritarian reign of Paul I (1754–1801), which may have affected her from age nine to about fifteen, may have laid the foundation for her life-long, strongly pro-monarchist convictions. Naumova was about twenty-five years old in 1812, the year of the war against Napoleon. This event gave rise to a number of patriotic poems among Russian authors, and Vasil'ev mentions that Naumova herself commemorated it in a poem printed in 1814, the year which marks the beginning of her appearance in the public sphere of literary publication, in which she remained up to the 1820s.

Her youth, and her early twenties in particular, were marked by two socio-literary trends. On the one hand, there was light-hearted salon poetry, initiated by the literary reforms of the Sentimentalist Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826). Then there was the political and patriotic style of the emerging Decembrists, the country's young and rebellious elite, who unsuccessfully tried to introduce their republican ideals into the political system. Their radical plans were fuelled by the seemingly liberal climate at the beginning of the reign of Alexander I (1777–1825). Naumova however, as I will discuss below, strictly condemned any attempts which might have threatened the existing social order.

Like Mariia Bolotnikova (published in 1817), whose work I discussed in the previous chapter, Naumova was a provincial woman writer. In contrast to Bolotnikova, we know that Naumova was actively involved in the cultural life which began to develop in the provinces during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that one of her main occupations was to provide an education to young girls, many of whom were orphans. She was born and spent her entire life in the village of Ziuzin. Although her landowner parents were rather poor, she managed to achieve financial stability and even wealth. She had a large number of wards, some of them from good families, who lived at her home, with Naumova looking after their matrimonial interests once they had grown up. Her concern about young girls' education may have been influenced by the 1812 war against Napoleon, which left many orphaned children. Her interest was also in keeping with the advice of the *Domostroi*, a domestic handbook, which listed the care for young girls and homeless people among a Russian person's duties.<sup>2</sup> Naumova sacrificed a substantial part of her fortune when providing her wards

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<sup>2</sup> Nada Boškovska: *Die russische Frau im 17. Jahrhundert*. Böhlau: Köln 1998, p. 245: 'Der Kompilator des *Domostroj*, Silvester, schreibt im „Brief und Vermahnung eines Vaters an den Sohn“, nachdem er dargelegt hat, dass er selbst zahlreiche Waisen ernährt und ausgebildet habe: „Deine Mutter aber hat viele junge Mädchen und obdachlose bedürftige Witwen in guter Vermahnung erzogen, sie in Handarbeit

with dowries in order to enable them to get married. In so doing, she fulfilled one of the Russian noble mother's most important duties towards her daughters. An account of Naumova's life by Vladimir Panaev, who was a young man when he met her, mentions that she was then in charge of some thirty girls, and that they were mainly occupied with handicraft.<sup>3</sup> This was the kind of training likely to enable help them to earn a living after they had left her care.

Naumova benefited from the expansion of education and cultural life in the provinces, which began to manifest itself during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when in and around Kazan a few cultured societies and literary circles emerged, manifestations of an authentic public sphere, some of which were accessible to women. Naumova was among the few women writers to enliven the literary landscape around Kazan, a region which was to produce other women poets such as Alexandra Fuks (c.1805–1853).<sup>4</sup> Naumova's small home town of Ziuzin was located approximately eight and a half kilometres from Emel'ianivka, the nearest centre of active literary life. We do not know to what extent she participated in cultured societies there, but Vasil'ev's article indicates that in her youth she frequented literary circles in Kazan.

When she was in her twenties, the Panaev family, who played a key role in Kazan's cultural life, seem to have supported her literary endeavours. One of the members of this family, Vladimir Panaev (1792–1859), was famous for his idylls in the style of Swiss author Salomon Gessner (1730–1788). Their works doubtlessly had an impact on Naumova's writing, since she takes issue with this literary genre. She was also a close friend of his two sisters, Glafira and Poliksena Panaeva. Poliksena married a man of letters from Kazan, F. Ryndovskii, and is known to have held regular literary evenings, with readings of literary works and performances of plays taking place in her home and Naumova a frequent visitor.<sup>5</sup>

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*und jeglicher Hauswirtschaft unterrichtet, ihnen eine Aussteuer gegeben und sie verheiratet.*”

In English: ‘Having explained that he himself had fed and educated numerous orphans, the compiler of the *Domostroi*, Silvester, writes in “Letter and Warning of a Father to the Son”: “Your mother, however, instructed many a young girl and homeless, needy widow in good faith, teaching them handicrafts and all manner of housekeeping, and giving them a dowry and marrying them off.”’

<sup>3</sup> Valerian Panaev: ‘Vospominaniia’. *Russkaia starina. Ezhemesiachnoe istoricheskoe izdanie* 24, 1893, pp. 461–468.

<sup>4</sup> Mikhail Fainshtein: *Pisatel' nitsy pushkinskoi pory. Istoriko-literaturnye ocherki*. Nauka: Leningrad 1989, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> B. Bokova: *Epokha tainykh obshchestv. Russkie obshchestvennye ob''edineniia pervoi treti XIX v.* Realin: Moscow 2003, p. 190.



Panaev, Naumova's mentor in this literary circle, introduced her to another cultured society, *Obshchestvo liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti pri Kazanskom Universitete* (The Society of Lovers of National Philology at the University of Kazan).<sup>6</sup> It was made accessible to people outside university, and welcomed at least one woman writer, making Naumova one of its members. Although it failed to live up to its goal of presenting a highly academic literary circle to the public, it nevertheless offered a platform for cultural exchange for novices in the field of literature as well as for more established writers. It had its own statutes and, by 1818, counted 75 active and 25 honorary members.<sup>7</sup> Naumova's friendship with the Panaevs brought her an introduction to A. Izmailov (1818–1826), editor of the journal *Blagonamerennyi* (The Well-Intentioned). He was known to help people who had only just begun to write, and provincial authors in particular, and printed some of Naumova's poems in his journal.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these involvements in Kazan's cultural life, Naumova's home seems to have served as a place for social and intellectual gatherings, which reflects the salon culture at its peak during the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as described in Chapter Two. Naumova's collection of poems reproduces many aspects of salon culture, such as the way in which guests entertained themselves with games and amateur poetry: in her work we find poems about parlour games as well as album entries, which were also a part of salon culture. Naumova may well have had a wide network of acquaintances, as she must have had connections with people in Moscow, where she published her collection of poems and where her work was read during a session of the *Society of Lovers of Russian Philology at the Imperial Moscow University* (*Obshchestvo liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti pri Imperatorskom Moskovskom*

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On the fashion of presenting dramatic performances on provincial estates from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, see

Richard Stites: 'Female Serfs in the Performing World'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 24–38.

<sup>6</sup> This society was originally a student circle founded in 1807 as the *Society of Free Exercises in Russian Philology* (*Obshchestvo vol'nykh uprazhnenii v rossiiskoi slovesnosti*). The existence of this literary circle illustrates the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century emergence of cultural institutions in the provinces. In 1790, Kazan already boasted a theatre and a literary circle, and in 1805 the University of Kazan was inaugurated, encouraging some of its students to set up the *Society*. Among its members were some sons of the Panaev family. They met on Saturdays to read and critique their literary output. In 1812 the Society became the more formal *Society of the Lovers of National Philology at the University of Kazan*.

<sup>7</sup> S. Aksakov: *Semeinaia khronika. Vospominaniia*. Izdatel'stvo I.P. Dadyzhnikov: Berlin 1921, pp. 545–546; Bokova, pp. 188–190.

<sup>8</sup> Vasil'ev 1926, pp. 153–154.

Universitete).<sup>9</sup> Her network of acquaintances helped her to function as a kind of matchmaker for her wards, a fact which further challenges the cliché about provincial women's secluded lives. Naumova's vivacious and convivial nature also manifested itself in her predilection for organising evenings during which her girls presented dances, with some of them even performing for the tsar.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1820s Naumova's participation in Kazan's educated society unwittingly brought her in contact with a circle which shared the Decembrists' revolutionary ideas, and counted Decembrists such as Vasilii Ivashev and Dmitrii Zavalishin among its members, as Vasil'ev's study shows. Naumova, introduced to this society by her cousins, was not initially aware of its political nature. She welcomed the moral and religious debates as they corresponded to her own ideals of honour, virtue, and courage. In her youth Naumova was an avid reader of tales of chivalry, which celebrated such ideals, and she admits to having adored them all her life. The circle in which she participated had emerged from a society with semi-Masonic rites. Freemasonry was an important feature of Kazan's authentic public sphere, as were secret political societies. With its emphasis on moral self-perfection, inspired by Masonic ideology, the circle which Naumova frequented appealed to her. However, she condemned plans about the restructuring of the political order as soon as they became a frequent topic in the circle. In 1823 Naumova heard that Vladimir Panaev frequented and supported revolutionary circles in St Petersburg, where he was living at the time. Opposed to any political movement directed against the monarchy, she found it difficult to believe that Panaev, who had celebrated arcadian harmony in his idylls, should be involved in such circles. After the Decembrist uprising, the frankness with which Naumova wrote about the revolutionary ideals of the circle she had frequented brought her into conflict with both state officials and many of Kazan's noble families which had supported the Decembrists. She withdrew to her estate in Ziuzin and, although in her writings she still frequently commented on socio-political events, she concentrated her attention on the education and matrimonial interests of her wards.

In contrast to Mariia Pospelova (1780, 1783, or 1784–1805) discussed in Chapter Four, reports on Naumova present her as an authoritative, sprightly, and

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<sup>9</sup> A. Merzliakov: 'O sochineniiakh Gospozhi Naumovoi'. *Trudy obshchestva liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti pri imperatorskom Moskovskom universitete* 20, 1820, pp. 66–79.

<sup>10</sup> Panaev, p. 467.

strong-willed woman. Vladimir Panaev, who was an adolescent or young man when he visited Naumova's home with his father, admits to having feared and respected her. He further emphasises Naumova's temperament when mentioning her interest in horse riding, which did not seem to have diminished even after she suffered an accident in her youth which caused her to lose her eyesight and hearing on one side, a fact on which she comments in one of her poems.<sup>11</sup>

### **Publications by Naumova and reviews of her work**

The works of several authors, as well as various literary trends, are likely to have shaped Naumova's writing style. Apart from the tales of chivalry which Naumova read in her youth and the ideals of which she continued to worship throughout her life, she was, according to Vasil'ev, also familiar with the French language and French classicist literature.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, she is reported to have read the works of the Russian classicist and scientist Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765); the classicist poet Gavril Derzhavin (1743–1816); Karamzin, the founder of Sentimentalist literature; Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783–1852), the initiator of the Romantic movement in Russian literature; Ivan Dmitriev (1760–1837), the Sentimentalist; and Alexei Merzliakov (1778–1830), the poet and man of literature whose folk poems seem to have inspired her to compose a few poems in this genre. In 1814 two of Naumova's folk-style poems addressing the destruction of Moscow during the war against Napoleon were published in a collection dedicated to this event, containing poems by famous writers such as Derzhavin and Zhukovskii, but also by minor poets. In 1815 two poems by Naumova appeared in *Trudy Kazanskago obshchestva liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti* (Works of the Kazan Society of Lovers of Russian Philology). One of them is 'K iunoshe, ostavliaiushchemu rodinu' (To the Young Man Leaving his Homeland). In this poem the narrator warns a young man, who sets out to travel the world, that misfortune and evil may strike anywhere, and that escaping abroad will make them even harder to bear:

О юноша! поверь, сам опытом узнаешь  
Что под луной нигде без горя счастья нет;

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<sup>11</sup> Panaev, pp. 467–468;

Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaia tipografiia: Moscow 1819. 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75 (p. 69).

<sup>12</sup> Vasil'ev 1926, pp. 149–155.

Разврат, который здесь быть может проклинаешь,  
Гораздо более тебя там ужаснет.<sup>13</sup>

*O youth! believe me, experience will teach you,  
There is no earthly happiness without sorrow;  
Vice, which here perhaps you curse,  
There will horrify you more.*<sup>14</sup>

The poem is an early example of Naumova's predilection for presenting her lyrical persona as a wise old teacher who advises young people on how to cope with life's difficulties.

In 1819 Naumova published a collection of poems under the title, *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov* (The Solitary Muse from the Kama Shores).<sup>15</sup> This work gained her relative fame as a writer, and it seems that travellers passing through Kazan often called at her house in order to meet the renowned woman poet.<sup>16</sup> Like many other women writers, she was also dubbed the 'Russian Sappho'. However, the term was often used in order to refer to an 'unprofessional' style of women's writing. Either because of this connotation or out of modesty, Naumova rejected it for herself in one of her poems, as the ensuing discussion of this topic will suggest. Among Naumova's further publications, there are a few poems which appeared in Izmailov's literary journal, *The Well-Intentioned*.

From 1820 to 1830 Naumova continued to write, as her substantial collection of manuscripts shows; there is no evidence, however, that any of her works were published. Apart from poetry, which she often used to comment on current social events, in 1821 she also wrote two plays: *Vladimir i Mstislav ili sila liubvi i dobrodeteli nad cheloveskom velikodushnym. Drama s khorami v 3 deistviakh* (Vladimir and Mstislav, or, The Strength of Love and Virtue over Human Magnanimity. A Drama with Chorus in Three Acts), and *Epitidy ili liubov' i mshchenie* (The Aepyti, or, Love and

<sup>13</sup> Anna Naumova: 'K iunoshe, ostavliaiushchemu rodinu'. *Trudy Kazanskago obshchestva liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti* 1, 1815, pp. 276–277 (p. 276).

<sup>14</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaia tipografiia: Moscow 1819.

<sup>16</sup> M. De-Pule: 'Otets i syn: Opyt kul'turno-biograficheskoi khroniki. 1815–1822'. *Russkii Vestnik* 7, 1875, pp. 56–79 (p. 78).

Vengeance).<sup>17</sup> Performances of these plays may well have been part of the entertainment in the literary circles hosted or attended by Naumova.

When Naumova's 1819 collection of poems was presented during a meeting of the *Society of Lovers of Russian Philology at the Imperial Moscow University*, she was celebrated as evidence of the fact that Russia had moved forward into an age of cultural refinement. In his comments on her work, Aleksei Merzliakov followed the Classicist conceptions of *translatio imperii* (transfer of rule), i.e. the notion that times of great literary achievement transfer themselves from one nation to another. He mentions ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance Italy, the France of Louis XIV and the Germany of the previous century, and expects Russia to be next in line. He refers to the long-standing critical topos according to which the participation of women in literary endeavours is regarded as a sign of the high status of culture in a nation. He considers the achievements of Catherine the Great to be the necessary and ideal preconditions for this development, and honours Naumova as a highly gifted writer who has continued this legacy.<sup>18</sup>

Other critics, such as the author of a short review in 1881 of her work, reiterate the image which Sentimentalism had presented of women poets when declaring that Naumova spent her life contemplating the landscape around Kazan and enjoying herself by occasionally writing 'verselets'. He adds that her work contains the usual 'ahs' and 'ohs' common in Sentimentalist literature. Even though some emotional exclamations can be found in Naumova's poetry, this comment could give an inadequate impression of her work. Nature, for instance, does not feature prominently in Naumova's work. Her poems are also far from being sentimental 'verselets'.<sup>19</sup>

### Overview of the poems in Naumova's collection

One of the main topics in Naumova's collection of poems is the Sentimentalist theme of friendship. Naumova's poetry often expresses grief about the lack of real friendship.

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<sup>17</sup> Vasil'ev 1926, p. 173.

On 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian women writers as producers and translators of plays, see also Lurana Donnels O'Malley: 'Signs from Empresses and Actresses. Women and Theatre in the Eighteenth Century'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 9–23.

<sup>18</sup> Merzliakov 1820, pp. 66–79.

<sup>19</sup> P. Vasil'ev: 'Kratkiiia svedeniia o Kazanskikh zhenshchinakh-pistel'nitsakh'. In: Nazar'ev, V. (ed.): *Kalendar'-ukazatel' goroda Kazani*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Kazan' 1881, pp. 138–141 (p. 139).

Her lyrical persona regrets that people whom she had considered to be her friends have turned out to be dishonest, or that they have begun to avoid her without her knowing the reason for this emotional distance. Often the narrator addresses them directly.

In 'Vozzvanie k druž'iam' (Appeal to my Friends), for instance, she asks to know what she has done to deserve their rejection. In 'K Sashe' (To Sasha) or 'K Temire' (To Temira), she appeals to her readers to remember the now absent but once sincere friendship they had shared. Another characteristic theme in Naumova's collection is the Sentimentalist scepticism about the big city's glory, wealth and luxury. The narrator contrasts them with the simple but far more sincere way of life in the country. In the poem 'Na ot'ezd vernago druga v Moskvu' (On the Departure of a Sincere Friend to Moscow), for instance, the lyrical persona warns her addressee not to be too impressed by the corrupt life he will encounter in the city, and asks him to remember his children and the goodness of his wife Sasha, who are left behind in the country. Even though simple country life is an important ideal for the narrator, she also dissociates herself from the gender connotations which male authors of Sentimentalist literature had created for this topos.

The absence of sincere friendship is at odds with the image of the carefree country maiden, as poems such as 'Schastliva Delia' (Happy is Delia) suggest. There are also a few poems in which the narrator describes the importance of writing poetry. In some of them, such as 'K Fantazii' (To Imagination) or 'K Muzam' (To the Muses), the lyrical persona expresses to female poetic personae her appreciation of her gift of writing. A considerable part of Naumova's work revolves around salon culture, divination, fate, and the relations between the sexes; examples include 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba' (Yesterday's Reading), 'K sud'be' (To Fate), or 'Vozrazhenie sud'by' (Fate's Rebuttal). In poems such as 'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.' (On A.L.S.'s Precious Casket), 'V al'bom moemu drugu L.N.' (For My Friend L.N.'s Album), 'Urok molodym devushkam' (A Lesson to Young Girls) or 'Kupidonova lotereia' (Cupid's Lottery), the narrator emphasises how important it is for a young woman to choose the right husband. There are also a few poems in which she quite openly expresses her opinion on current socio-political issues. One of them is 'Na vol'nodumstvo' (On Free-Thinking), in which she condemns the social unrest free-thinking could bring. In poems such as 'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam' (Appeal to Russian Women), she criticises the lack of

patriotic feelings in contemporary society. Elsewhere, for example in 'Na smert' Derzhavina' (On the Death of Derzhavin), she honours great Russian writers of her time. 'Russkii pesni' (Russian Songs) and 'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila' (The Young Woman Walked across the Field) are among her few works to imitate folk poetry.<sup>20</sup>

In none of Naumova's poems can we find the enthusiastic descriptions of nature which were such a crucial feature of Sentimentalist literature at the time when she was writing. In her work, nature is of secondary importance. When she refers to idyllic scenery, it is usually to deconstruct the cultural meaning associated with it. Her focus has shifted to questions of interpersonal relationships and the impact of Fate on human life.

Some of the topics in Naumova's poetry originate in domains strongly associated with women, such as marriage and salon culture. As I have outlined, Naumova was a fairly well-known author in her time. However, her choice of topics may have been considered too personal, which is most likely the reason why she later fell out of favour with readers and critics. It may well be that the works of women authors of that period have been overlooked by readers and scholars for such a long time because women writers were expected to have different standards of originality in their poems about topics which were part of the female sphere of life rather than subjects in line with male-established norms.

### **Naumova creates her self-image as a woman poet**

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<sup>20</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k druž'am', pp. 7–17;  
 'K Sashe', pp. 89–91;  
 'K Temire', pp. 89–102;  
 'Na ot'ezd vernago druga v Moskvu', pp. 85–88;  
 'Schastliva Delia, Poet uedinennyi', pp. 130–135;  
 'K Fantazii', pp. 8–23;  
 'K Muzam', pp. 143–150;  
 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84;  
 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64;  
 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75;  
 'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.', p. 44;  
 'V al'bom moemu drugu L.N.', p. 45;  
 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37;  
 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–48;  
 'Na vol'nodumstvo', pp. 162–165;  
 'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam', pp. 188–193;  
 'Na smert' Derzhavina', pp. 24–29;  
 'Russkii pesni', pp. 38–39;  
 'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila', pp. 40–43.

The first poem of Naumova's collection is called 'K sviatomu kliuchu' (To the Holy Spring). In it, Naumova crucially establishes her self-image as a woman poet, thereby justifying her activity as a writer. Unlike in other poems in which she addresses the importance of writing to her, such as 'To Imagination' or 'To the Muses', Naumova here hints at the elements of a typically Sentimentalist idyllic landscape. Her lyrical persona adopts the guise of the modest country maiden, expressing her hesitation to ascend Mount Parnassus, a metaphor for poetry in Classicist discourse, declaring that she has chosen a different and more contemplative mode of writing symbolised by the holy waters of the Well of Hippocrene:

Оставя помысл дерзновенной,  
 Мечтой к Парнаксу не лечу,  
 Но в меланхолии смиренной  
 Ключу Святому дань плачу.  
 Парнасс, чрезчур гора крутая,  
 Ну, мнелъ взбираться на нее?  
 Попытка в том былаб пустая.  
 И так оставляю я ее.

Довольствуясь в иную пору,  
 Уединяясь вечерком,  
 Всходить на ту высокоу гору,  
 Котора над Святым ключем,  
 На ней сижу и размышляю,  
 Иль с книгою в руках лежу,  
 Иль мысль прошедшим забавляю,  
 Иль вниз на ключь Святой гляжу.

На что мне воды Иппокрены?  
 Напьюсь в охоту из него;  
 Судьбы и время перемены  
 Напомнят мне струи его. —  
 Его водой я умываюсь,



Его теченьем веселюсь,  
 Его я музой называюсь,  
 Им утешаюсь, им живлюсь.<sup>21</sup>

*I've left behind my daring designs,  
 I dream no longer of Parnassus,  
 But with melancholic acceptance  
 I pay my tribute to the Sacred spring.  
 Parnassus is a peak too steep,  
 Should I be trying to ascend?  
 I know it's futile even to try,  
 And so I let the idea go.*

*Being content another time  
 Spending the evening on my own,  
 To climb up to that highest peak  
 That rises above the Sacred spring,  
 There I sit and think my thoughts,  
 Or lie, a book clasped in my hands,  
 Or entertain some thoughts of old,  
 Or once again look on the Sacred spring.*

*What are the waters of Hippocrene to me?  
 I'll gladly drink my fill from them;  
 Fates and changes over time  
 Its streams bring to my mind.  
 I wash myself with those waters,  
 I calm myself with that current,  
 I call myself these waters' muse,  
 Take comfort, even life from them.<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K sviatomu kliuchu', pp. 3–6 (pp. 3–4).

<sup>22</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

These octets express the kind of understatement expected of authors at the time — and of women in particular: a declaration that they were unable to or would not compete with established writers.<sup>23</sup>

A reply to Naumova's opening poem suggests how important it was at the time for a woman writer to profess modesty and gratitude for her male mentors' support. Merzliakov responded to Naumova's work with a few lines, taking up the image of the muse and the Holy Spring of Hippocrene, yet complaining that her poems did not mention him explicitly enough as her poetic model. In her reply, Naumova reassured him of the importance of his support, apologising for her muse's thoughtlessness. Naumova's use of the image of the muse as an excuse for her non-conformity demonstrates how the poet has endowed this female character with features of irrationality and fickleness, and that it is not Naumova herself who has forgotten to mention her mentor. As mentioned in Chapter Three, women authors projected these features onto the female character of the muse in order to apologise for their non-conformist behaviour in the male-dominated world of literature.

Not only does Naumova's opening poem profess modesty with regard to her writing skills; to a certain extent it also implies dissociation from the Classicist canon. Her verses hint at the opening of *L'Art poétique* (The Art of Poetry, 1674) by French author Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711). Well known in Russia both in its original version and in translations, it revived neo-Classicism at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Anna Bunina's (1774–1829) translation of its first canto was published.<sup>24</sup> In the first lines of *The Art of Poetry*, the French 'Legislator of Parnassus', as Boileau was called in

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<sup>23</sup> Vasil'ev 1926, p. 154.

A similar gesture occurs in the foreword to Mariia Bolotnikova's collection of poems, for example, where she reassures her readers that she has no intention whatsoever to measure herself against more gifted and better educated authors, but that she simply enjoys writing poetry for her closest friends, see M. Bolotnikova: 'Predislovie'. In: *Derevenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia*. Tipografiia Reshetnikova: Moscow 1817, pp. i–iv, as discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>24</sup> J. Klein: 'Sumarokov und Boileau. Die Epistel „Über die Verskunst“ in ihrem Verhältnis zur „Art poétique“. Kontextwechsel als Kategorie der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft'. *Zeitschrift für slavisches Philologie* 50, 1990, pp. 254–304;

D. Lang: 'Boileau and Sumarokov. The Manifesto of Russian Classicism'. *The Modern Language Review* 43, 1948, pp. 500–506;

I. Klein: 'Russkii Boalo? Epistola Sumarokova „O Stikhotvorstve“ v vospriatii sovremennikov'. In: XVIII vek 18, Nauka: St Petersburg 1993, pp. 40–58;

A. Bunina: 'Nauka o stikhotvorstve iz G. Boalo'. *Neopytnaia muza*. Tipografiia Shnora: St Petersburg 1809. 'Nauka o stikhotvorstve iz G. Boalo', pp. 91–100.

France, issues a warning to aspiring poets, advising them to consider carefully whether they have the talent and necessary strength to undertake the writing of poetry:

C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur  
 Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur :  
 S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète,  
 Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète,  
 Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif:  
 [...]
 Craignez d'un vain plaisir les trompeuses amorces,  
 Et consultez longtemps votre esprit et vos forces.

*Rash Author, 'tis a vain presumptuous Crime  
 To undertake the Sacred Art of Rhyme;  
 If at thy Birth the Stars that rul'd thy Sense  
 Shone not with a Poetic Influence:  
 In thy strait Genius thou still be bound  
 [...]
 Fear the allurements of a specious Bait,  
 And well consider your own Force and Weight.*<sup>25</sup>

Choosing an alternative poetic metaphor to Boileau's Mount Parnassus, Naumova's narrator climbs Helicon, the other mountain dedicated to poets, and delights in the Holy Spring of Hippocrene. According to ancient mythology, this source sprang up when Pegasus' hoof struck Helicon, and ever since has quenched aspiring poets' thirst of inspiration. Both Parnassus and Helicon were seats of Apollo and the Muses. However, Naumova is careful to elaborate only upon the image of the muses and the idyllic scenery of the source which evokes arcadian landscapes typical of Sentimentalist literature. As the narrator washes herself in the refreshing, comforting water of the spring, she considers herself one of its muses.

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<sup>25</sup> Nicolas Boileau: *Satires, Épitres, Art poétique*. J. Collinet (ed.). Gallimard: Paris 1985, pp. 227–258 (p. 227);

Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux: *The Art of Poetry*. Soames, William (transl.). Bentley and Magnès: London 1683, p. 1; sadly, Soames' English translation does not convey Boileau's comparison of poetry with a dangerously high mountain.

The woman poet as a muse is incompatible with male representations of the poet, and contrasts sharply with the masculine language of Boileau's *Art of Poetry*, which brims with rhetoric of the sublime, i.e. allusions to vigour, mountains and the creative genius. Naumova, on the other hand, associates the woman poet with calmness and melancholy, echoing Sentimentalist concepts of the writing of poetry as a spontaneous act.<sup>26</sup>

As in her prayer 'To Imagination', Naumova's poetry frequently evokes female characters, in this case an inspirational female deity in white surrounded by roses and lilies.<sup>27</sup> Naumova's poem 'To the Muses' also associates the creative process with female characters. Revising Sentimentalist images about the writing process, where it is Creation which inspires the poet, the narrator in 'To the Muses' declares that it is not nature but the muses who have taught her how to write:

Вы управляли всеконечно  
Умом, и сердцем, и душой,  
Стараясь добросердечно  
Образовать талант и мой.<sup>28</sup>

*You always held sway over me,  
My mind, my heart and my soul,  
Trying hard, sincerely,  
To shape my talent as well.*<sup>29</sup>

Contrary to the way in which the muses are often presented in poetry written by men, i.e. as charming sources of inspiration, here they are imperious authorities:

Велите — воспою Темиру,  
Невинность, счастье, любовь;  
Велите — и тотчас прославлю  
Я благоденство юных лет

<sup>26</sup> In this respect, there is a resemblance between Pospelova's and Naumova's works.

<sup>27</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K Fantazii', pp. 18–23.

<sup>28</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K muzam', pp. 143–150 (p. 143; p. 147).

<sup>29</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*Command me — I will sing of Temira,  
Innocence, joy and love;  
Command me — and at once I'll praise  
The flowering of youth.*

The verb 'command' (velite) is repeated twice more in this poem and expresses the woman poet's deference to the muses' authority. If they tell her to do so, she will also sing the glory of the tsar on her lyre. However, in contrast with the Classicist and male-connoted imagery imposed by leading poets such as Boileau, she will not praise him with loud trumpet-blasts, but pour out her unpretentious, yet sincere feelings for him through the lyre:

Пусть те трубами восхищают,  
Я лирой чувства изъявлю.

*Let them take delight in trumpets,  
I'll express my feelings with the lyre.*

The trumpet (truba) and the lyre (lira) have specific poetic meanings. While the loud and heroic trumpet is a symbol of high genres of poetry such as the ode — often the panegyric ode at that, announcing wars and victories — the lyre symbolises the genre of poetry as such; it could also be associated with middle genres such as the Anacreontic ode, whose theme is love.<sup>30</sup> In Sentimentalism, and in Naumova's work in particular, the lyre stands for poetry ranking lower in the Classicist genre system.

The use of symbols which diverge from male-connoted Classicist models, such as substituting the lyre for the trumpet, for example, helps women poets create their self-image as authors, and enables them to justify their activity as writers. Despite its essentialist assumptions, the Sentimentalist concept of the woman writer turns out to be beneficial for women poets as creatures outside the (masculine) tradition, assuming their innate goodness, and thereby allowing them to pour out their feelings in poetry.

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<sup>30</sup> Joachim Klein: 'Trompete, Schalmey, Lyra und Fiedel (Poetologische Sinnbilder) im russischen Klassizismus'. *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 44, 1984, pp. 1–19.

In her poem 'To the Holy Spring', Naumova reverts to a tradition established for the so-called weaker sex, heeding Boileau's advice that only the strong and chosen ones should follow the path he has outlined. This becomes clear from the continuation of her opening poem, in which a brook springs from the Holy Spring of Hippocrene. The muse-poet enjoys sitting on the banks of the stream, reflecting on the ephemeral nature and inconsistencies of life:

О милый ключь, о ключь мой милой!  
 Течешь в долине ты ручьем,  
 И сердцу непостижной силой  
 Гласишь журчанием своим:  
 «Я и теперь не пременился,  
 «Хоть много видел перемен;  
 «В теченьи я не изменился,  
 «Но был свидетелем измен.<sup>31</sup>

*O sweet spring, my dear sweet spring!*  
*Your stream flows through this valley,*  
*And with incomprehensible strength*  
*Your burbling speaks to my heart:*  
*'Still now I have not changed at all,*  
*Though I've seen many other changes,*  
*My current has not changed one bit,*  
*Though I have witnessed treachery.<sup>32</sup>*

Like other women authors of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Naumova uses the topos of the brook in her opening poem as a means of creating her self-image and to justify her activity as a poet: the idyllic landscape around her inspires her to contemplate human nature.

Inspired by the French writer Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde Deshoulières (c.1638–1694) and her poem, 'Le ruisseau' (The Brook), many Russian women poets

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<sup>31</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K sviatomu kliuchu', pp. 3–6 (p. 4).

<sup>32</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

employed this topos. Among them were Mariia Sushkova (1752–1803), Ekaterina Urusova (1747–?), Alexandra Khvostova (1767–1853), Mariia Pospelova, Anna Volkova (1781–1834), and Mariia Bolotnikova, as outlined in Chapter Three. The topos is attractive to these women writers because of Sentimentalism's predilection for the pastoral and its view of women as being particularly in tune with nature. Also, it excludes love, a particularly delicate, not to say immoral subject for women of that time to write about. Many poems use the brook metaphor to focus on the grief caused by the insincerity of false friends.

As in Urusova's 'Ruchei' (The Brook), the clear waters are often associated with the lyrical persona's mood.<sup>33</sup> The same is true of Naumova's poem, in which the brook is given a voice to declare that

«Струи мои и днесь прозрачны,  
«По тем же камешкам теку;  
«Твои же мысли стали мрачны  
«Ты часто чувствуешь тоску.»

*My waters are still flowing clear,  
I'm running over these same stones;  
Your thoughts have grown despondent,  
You're often filled with sorrow.*

As in other poems using this topos, the brook in Naumova's poem supplants the friend in whom the narrator has been accustomed to confide her thoughts.

By reproducing images of women as solitary beings who go for walks in the country and whose only friend is a brook, Naumova avoids conflict with Sentimentalist concepts about women poets.

### **Deconstructing the Sentimentalist topos of woman's closeness to nature**

If, at the beginning of her collection, Naumova refers to the Sentimentalist topos of women's closeness to nature in order to construct her self-image as an author, she

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<sup>33</sup> Ekaterina Urusova: 'Ruchei'. In: Göpfert, Frank / Fainshtein, Mikhail (eds): *Predstatel'nitsy muz. Russkie poetessy XVIII veka*. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1998, pp. 216–217. For an English translation of this poem by Urusova, see Ewington, pp. 276–280.

takes issue with this concept in her poems, 'K Delii' (To Delia) and 'Happy is Delia'.<sup>34</sup> As frequently occurs in her work, the two poems are a dialogue between the representative of a poetic tradition (To Delia), and a narrator who criticises this view (Happy is Delia).<sup>35</sup>

'To Delia' is written from a male poet's point of view. He envies Delia for her peaceful life in a little cabin in the country, close to nature and far away from the city's hustle and bustle, expressing his hope that she — innocent and free from harmful passions — will continue to run across fields and walk in groves. Just like Erast at the beginning of Karamzin's archetypical Sentimentalist novel *Bednaia Liza* (Poor Liza, 1792), the male persona in this poem associates woman with nature and absence of conflict. In his eyes both women and nature are uncorrupted by civilisation and the human vices it has engendered. He literally equates woman with nature when he says of Delia that she blossoms like a flower:

Меж тем в полях своих, невинная душой,  
Ты, Делия, цветешь, не зная злой кручины.<sup>36</sup>

*While in your fields, your soul is innocent,  
You blossom, never knowing evil sorrow.*<sup>37</sup>

It is this equation of woman with nature and happiness which Naumova challenges in her reply, 'Happy is Delia'. The poem opens with the word 'Schastliva' (Happy...), a variation on the standard translation of the Horatian *Beatus ille*, i.e. 'Blazhen, kto' (Blessed he who). By alluding to the Horatian model, Naumova evokes the idea that happiness can only be found in the peaceful countryside. She dissociates herself from the pastoral tradition, however, when her narrator gives an ironic account of the man's description of Delia in the previous poem. She mocks his sentimental tone and

<sup>34</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K Delii', pp. 127–129; 'Schastliva Delia, Poet uedinennyi...', pp. 130–135. The full Russian text of these two poems and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>35</sup> The genre of a poetic dialogue can also be found in the works by other contemporary women poets, see Frank Göpfert: 'Russische Dichterinnen des 18. Jahrhunderts im Selbst- und Fremdverständnis klassizistischer Dichtung. Elizaveta Cheraskova und Ekaterina Urusova'. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 21–40.

<sup>36</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K Delii', pp. 127–129 (p. 128).

<sup>37</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



imitates his comparison of Delia with a pure, innocent, heavenly creature who spends her carefree days outside, or in the solitude of her little cabin. The female lyrical persona's irony manifests itself in repetitions such as 'tak milo, milo' (so sweetly, sweetly) to describe the man's way of extolling his Delia, and in criticism of his endowing Delia with all kinds of charming epithets, claiming that he must have been inspired by an angel to be thinking of weaving a wreath of myrtle and lilies for Delia. Naumova's narrator further ridicules the male perception of women according to which Delia's feelings are more sublime than those of mere mortals, and man's object of adoration a symbol of Eden.

She then asks the man to tell her where the wonderful Delia lives, because if she really existed, she would go to her straight away and spend her days with Delia in her peaceful solitude, going for walks with her along a little brook and singing songs with her. She repeats her question to the poet and insists that he show her the way to his beloved, expressing her impatience in phrases such as 'no gdezh' (yet where now) and the word 'gde' (where) several times. Subsequent lines imply that the male poet has failed to explain where such a miraculous creature might live and the narrator, eager to expose the truth, declares that there is no such happiness on earth, accusing him of having invented Delia.

In order to illustrate the collision between ideal and reality, the lyrical persona next asks the poet whether his description was really true and requests him to say whether, when portraying Delia like this, a fantasy had gripped him. She suspects him of behaving been deceived by how things looked, and of having judged Delia by rumour without knowing the truth, accusing him of emotional immaturity and maintaining he did not yet know people at thirty. She also repeats her warning that appearances could sometimes be deceptive because a cheerful face may often hide sorrow, and goes on to reveal that he might find suffering, depression, tears and melancholy behind the façade of the *beata illa*, the ever-happy and angelic girl. The one-dimensional and idealising depictions of the pastoral tradition contrast sharply with her view according to which the man searches in vain for heavenly bliss and complete perfection.

'Happy is Delia' ends with Naumova's lyrical persona assuming a role which also occurs in her other poems, i.e. that of a wise woman who advises people on how to proceed in life. In this role, she requests the poet to stop envying his dearest Delia,

and not to live the way he wished but as God ordered. Finally, she tells him to admit that Delia is a dream.

The poem can be interpreted at two levels. One is in accord with the traditional interpretation of the Sentimentalist topos of regret about the loss of sincerity since humans emerged from the mythological Golden Age: it is reproduced by the narrator's reply to the poet as she laments the absence of someone who might achieve the high standards of virtue established by Sentimentalist discourse. In the world she lives in, people are mean and dishonest; someone as virtuous and sincere as Delia does not exist. On a different level, Naumova criticises the perception of women as idealised and angelic beings removed from civilisation, and the oft-reproduced Sentimentalist association of woman and nature with subordination. Karamzin's *Poor Liza*, for instance, suggests that woman is closer to nature, yet easily discarded if and when the male protagonist considers culture and its material interests to be of greater importance.

Naumova's narrator expresses the view that a character such as Delia, who has lived a life untouched by the evils engendered by human society, is a product of male imagination. She criticises men for equating women with innate goodness, and for projecting purity and virtue upon the female sex alone. These stereotypes force women to strive for impossible, even 'terrible perfection' to use Barbara Heldt's title of her study of this topic in Russian literature.<sup>38</sup> Naumova's criticism deconstructs the cultural myth which functionalises women, forcing them to assume the unrealistically passive, virtuous role of being, for example, a source of inspiration for men. By divorcing reality from art and introducing a negative aspect, i.e. women's unhappiness even in an idyllic rural setting, she exposes an idealised perception of women.

Idealised concepts of women and nature are further revised in Naumova's 'K El'vire' (To Elvira) and the ensuing 'Otvet' (Reply).<sup>39</sup> 'To Elvira' reproduces typical patterns of Sentimentalist love lyrics inspired by Gessner-style idylls. As mentioned in Chapter Two, his works were very popular in Russia during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Naumova's friendship with Vladimir Panaev, writer of idylls who was considered to be the Russian Gessner, is very likely to have influenced her when

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<sup>38</sup> Barbara Heldt: *Terrible Perfection. Women and Russian Literature*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1992.

<sup>39</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K El'vire', pp. 136–137; 'Otvet', pp. 138–142.

The entire Russian originals and English translations of these poems can be found in the Appendix.

writing these two poems. They take up the motif of two tenderly affectionate doves very popular at the time. In Gessner's work, it appears in prose poems such as 'Damon. Phyllis' (Damon. Phyllis), where a man tries to overcome a woman's resistance by asking her to emulate the doves' example. It also features in his pastoral novel *Daphnis* and in the unpublished poem, 'Die Dauben' (The Doves).<sup>40</sup> In Russian literature of the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the dove motif became so popular that it was even used to represent ideal relationships between brothers and sisters.<sup>41</sup>

Naumova's 'To Elvira' presents a man observing two doves. He encourages his beloved Elvira to look at and imitate them. Then he complains that, unlike the doves, she has broken her word and is now in love with someone else. In response to the requirements of modesty imposed on women, Naumova's interpretation of the dove topos is more virtuous than Gessner's original. In her poem, the birds symbolise fidelity between the lovers rather than an encouragement for the woman to yield to the man's entreaties.

In Naumova's 'Reply', the lyrical persona takes the man to task for accusing Elvira of having broken her word. Softening the message, the poem opens with a typically Sentimentalist statement of regret for the loss of sincere feelings in humans. Then the narrator overtly attacks the man for his behaviour, suggesting that the fault might be on his side, that he might be jealous, or that he may have lost his love for Elvira, and that he is looking for a pretext to abandon her. She asks him to question his own feelings and actions, to be honest with himself and, if he really is a hypocrite, to be ashamed of himself and to apologise to Elvira. If he should fail to do so, the narrator will expose his lie to the world: having the gift of writing, this is what she must do. The remainder of the poem considers that Elvira might indeed have been unfaithful and in love with somebody else, in which case there is no point in complaining about her. The

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<sup>40</sup> Salomon Gessner: 'Damon. Phyllis' (Damon. Phyllis). In: Kesselmann, Heidemarie: *Die Idyllen Salomon Gessners im Beziehungsfeld von Ästhetik und Geschichte im 18. Jahrhundert*. Scriptor: Kronberg 1976, pp. 33–35.

On the motif of the doves in 'Daphnis' (Daphnis) and 'Die Dauben' (The Doves), see Voss' comment in Salomon Gessner: *Idyllen*. Voss, Ernst (ed.). Reclam Jun.: Stuttgart 1988, p. 147.

<sup>41</sup> The poem 'Liubov' brata s sestroi' (The Love of Brother and Sister), published in *Detskaia biblioteka* (1820), gives evidence of this popularity: 'Brother: // Sister, look at these doves / How in love with each other they seem! / How comfortable they are together! How friendly! / If one is gay, the other is gay, / When that one frowns, this one grows sad; / Their friendship is great; you know they are brothers and sisters. // Sister: / I think so too; you and I like them, / In agreement pass the day. / Where you are not, there is nothing gay for Parasha, / All my happiness is in the happiness of Nikolasha; / More devoted to you, no one could be; / Oh, we will love each other thus forever.' Quoted (in English) in J. Tovrov: *The Russian Noble Family. Structure and Change*. Garland Publishing: New York 1987, p. 228.

man with whom she is now in love will soon abandon her if he realises that she was unfaithful to someone else. At that point, the narrator in 'Reply' suggests that the unhappy lover should forgive Elvira and live a happy life with her.

'Reply' challenges the Gessner-style love idyll, as well as men's practice of the elegy, deconstructing the cliché of woman symbolising an unattainable object of attraction for the man, and woman's rejection providing an occasion for him to recognise and describe his feelings with poetic eloquence, as outlined in Chapter Two. Naumova exposes this stereotype, demonstrating how detached it has become from reality. The lyrical persona in 'Reply' takes the woman's side, revising the elegy's gender pattern. When she requires the man to investigate his own motives rather than uttering empty complaints, the narrator deprives him of the opportunity to express feelings of disappointed love; in so doing, she silences him. Thus, the narrator questions a poetic tradition that objectifies women, and stipulates a type of behaviour which more closely reflects the reality of both sexes. Assuming the mission of exposing the truth, the lyrical persona here not only criticises cultural images; by deconstructing the pattern with disarming frankness, she debunks a cherished Sentimentalist tradition.

### **Re-writing the myth of Sappho's death**

Naumova also reinvents the myth concerning the death of Sappho, the woman poet from Greek mythology usually represented as having been driven to suicide by throwing herself into the sea from the Leucadian cliff because her lover Phaon had rejected her. As outlined in Chapter Three, several 19<sup>th</sup>-century women writers dissociated themselves from the patriarchal interpretation of this myth, and from the notion that women were unable to cope with rejection. Naumova's work provides an early example of this tendency in Russian literature. Her poems alluding to the myth of Sappho are 'Ot pustynnika-poeta' (From the Hermit Poet) and 'K pustynniku-poetu' (To the Hermit Poet).<sup>42</sup> They also reflect a surge of interest in Sappho in Russia during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the tendency to equate the name of Sappho with 'woman poet'.

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<sup>42</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Ot pustynnika-poeta', pp. 113–114; 'K pustynniku-poetu', pp. 115–119.

The Russian originals of these texts and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

In the first poem, 'From the Hermit Poet', a hermit poet pays compliments to a woman poet by praising her, asking her where she has obtained her gift, and calling her a Russian Sappho. In her response to this poem, 'To the Hermit Poet', however, the woman poet rejects Sappho's name because her modesty — reinforced by her looking at the ground — does not allow her to compare herself to such a famous literary model:

Имя Сафы я не стою;  
 Мне ли Русской Сафой слыть?  
 Мне ли арфою святою  
 Так как ей известной быть?<sup>43</sup>

*I don't deserve the name of Sappho;  
 Could 'Russian Sappho' be my name?  
 Could I, armed with the sacred harp  
 Achieve the level of her fame?*<sup>44</sup>

The woman poet's refusal to be called a Russian Sappho is a way of paying lip service to the Sentimentalist concept of female modesty. However, her statement might also be a reaction to derogatory associations with this name during the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it began to have sarcastic connotations because of its frequent use. The ensuing question of the woman suggests both these views:

Не в насмешку ли искусство  
 Превозносишь ты мое?  
  
*And when you elevate my art  
 Perhaps you're really mocking me?*

When the hermit poet of 'From the Hermit Poet' asks her why she is such a gifted poet, her answer in 'To the Hermit Poet' refers to her heart:

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<sup>43</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Ot pustynnika-poeta', pp. 113–114.

<sup>44</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Но на сердце указала,  
Здесь умею грусть терпеть.<sup>45</sup>

*But as she gestured to her heart,  
Said, 'Here can I put up with grief.'*<sup>46</sup>

This is another way of saying that her writing occurs 'naturally', without her having any profound knowledge of classical models. It is Naumova's way of conforming to the Sentimentalist idea of the writing process as a result of individual sensitivity. However, by pointing to her heart and declaring that sadness motivates her creativity, she not only does justice to the Sentimentalist cult of the 'tender heart', but also hints at the elegiac nature of Sappho's poetry. The narrator's suggestion that Sappho mined her emotional disappointments for her poems, revises the idea that a woman poet is incapable of overcoming grief through writing.

As befits the Sentimentalist cult of friendship, the woman poet in 'To the Hermit Poet' has experienced disappointment — not in love, but due to the insincerity of people she trusted. In contrast with the model of Sappho's death, however, the lyrical persona here declares that her sorrow will not push her to commit suicide:

На утес крутой Левкада,  
Хоть и горько — не взойду,  
И от пасмурного взгляда  
Вниз с него не упаду.

Не хочу в ключе забвенья  
Вод целительных я пить;

*Though things are tough I will not climb  
The heights of the Levkada cliffs,  
And at a dark, foreboding glance,*

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<sup>45</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K pustynniku-poetu', pp. 115–119 ( 115).

<sup>46</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*I will not throw myself below.*

*I do not wish to quench my thirst*

*With waters of oblivion*

Her grief does not cast the lyrical persona into an ocean of emotional numbness, nor silence her as it silenced the mythological Sappho. In this way, Naumova revises the myth about women's inability to cope with sorrow.

In Naumova's work the notion of writing as a means of overcoming grief appears frequently, for example, in 'K dolgo slyvshemu moemu drugu' (To Him Whom I Long Considered My Friend).<sup>47</sup> Preceding a poetic dialogue with the hermit poet, this poem describes the narrator's feelings of disappointment. It evokes the elegiac genre as it laments the absence or loss of a beloved. However, unusually for the genre, it is written from the woman's point of view. The narrator grieves over the absence of a man who was a dear friend. In a characteristically Sentimentalist manner, she carefully recalls and describes the moments they spent together talking, reading Karamzin, and going for walks.

In only two lines evoking the lyrical persona's feelings for a woman, 'To Him Whom I Long Considered my Friend' further tells how this friend reassured her in her bewilderment over a woman who was also close to her heart. Although the two lines do not permit a conclusive interpretation, Naumova might be alluding to Sappho as a woman writer whose poems express her passion for women. Another interpretation would read these lines as an expression of the Sentimentalist cult of friendship — in this case between two women, and of regret about the end of her friendship with the man.

By describing the feelings of disappointment and sadness that the narrator experiences, the poem is an expression of Naumova's re-writing of the idea that despite their creative gift and the ability to use feelings as material for poems, women were unable to endure grief and rejection.

Another poem in which Naumova's narrator declares her creative gift to be a means for her to withstand betrayal in friendship is 'Simbirskomu sladkopevtu

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<sup>47</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K dolgo slyvshemu moemu drugu', pp. 103–112.

pustynniku-poetu' (To the Siberian Bard and Hermit Poet), which follows immediately on the poem mentioned above:

Так лучше, на лире от скуки играя,  
Любезнейшим Музам веночки свивать,  
Чем грустью томяся, как свечка сгая,  
Всечасно напрасно в душе унывать.<sup>48</sup>

*It's better, when playing the lyre from boredom,  
To weave for the gentlest Muses a wreath,  
Than to give in to sadness, burn away like a candle,  
It's always in vain that you pine in your soul.*<sup>49</sup>

Just like other women poets who rejected the idea that women were unable to cope with sorrow, Naumova makes her lyrical persona declare that Fate's heavy blows are no reason for her to despair, but inspire her to be creative instead. Moreover, she states that her troubles have taught her to adopt a more rational approach to life:

«Коль жертвою были коварства людского,  
«То опытом надо разумнее жить.

*If you fall victim to human cunning,  
Learn from experience how to be wise.*

Naumova's narrator claims that the bitter lessons life has taught her have made her wiser and more careful. In this, Naumova again resembles Bolotnikova, whose lyrical persona at the end of 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' declares that she will learn from difficult experiences.<sup>50</sup> In other words, Naumova not only revises the patriarchal myth of Sappho's death, but also the Sentimentalist concept of women as naive creatures.

<sup>48</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Simbirskomu sladkopevtu pustynniku-poetu', pp. 122–126 (p. 124).

<sup>49</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>50</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 52–55.



### 'A Lesson to Young Girls'

Another challenge to the Sentimentalist image of women as emotional and irrational creatures is 'Urok molodym devushkam' or 'A Lesson to Young Girls'.<sup>51</sup> It advises young women on how to proceed in matters of courtship. Matrimonial concerns, as well as salon culture, are an important topic in Naumova's collection, as revealed by other poems, such as 'On A.L.S.'s Precious Casket' and 'For My Friend L.N.'s Album'.<sup>52</sup> These two poems reproduce entries in an album, which were an important element in salon culture for young women. As often in Naumova's work, 'A Lesson to Young Women' is told from the point of view of a female character who offers guidance to young people. Here, the advice concerns the kind of behaviour young women should adopt in courtship and marriage. Female characters who provided instruction on 'good conduct and rational behaviour' were popular in the press at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as Catriona Kelly has shown.<sup>53</sup> Naumova introduces such a character to the field of literature.

The poem reflects an important element in the education of young girls, namely the role of the mother as the person who advises her daughter on how to deport herself in the company of a potential future husband. This type of literary conversation was strongly gendered; it occurred among women only. If a man chose to give advice to his daughter, then it was usually either on scholarly questions or on more abstract virtues. In Volkova's *Utrenniaia beseda slepago startsa s svoeiu docher'iu* (Morning Conversation of a Blind Old Man with His Daughter), for instance, an old man appears as a teacher of virtue to his daughter.<sup>54</sup>

'A Lesson to Young Girls' is also an attempt to revise the model of the naive girl which literary works such as Karamzin's *Poor Liza* suggest — a justified attempt considering the popularity of novels about romantic love at the time, especially among young girls, who occasionally empathised with the female protagonists to such an extent that it brought them, as Natal'ia Pushkareva suggests, 'to the point of serious

<sup>51</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37. The Russian original of this poem and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>52</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.', p. 45; 'V al'bom moemu drugu L.N.', p. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Catriona Kelly: 'Educating Tat'yana. Manners, Motherhood and Moral Education (Vospitanie). 1760–1840'. In: Edmondson, Linda (ed.): *Gender in Russian History and Culture*. Palgrave: Basingstoke 2001, pp. 1–28 (p. 16).

<sup>54</sup> Anna Volkova: *Utrenniaia beseda slepago startsa s svoeiu docher'iu*. Tipografiia imperatorskoi rossiiskoi akademii: St Petersburg 1824.

On this topic, see also Susan Smith-Peter: 'Educating Peasant Girls for Motherhood. Religion and Primary Education in Mid-Eighteenth Century Russia'. *Russian Review* 66, 2007, pp. 391–405.

psychological breakdowns'.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, real-life romantic love rarely mattered in decisions about marriage, and — as I have outlined in Chapter One — it was generally believed that love could blossom after marriage just as well as before. Spontaneous feelings of the heart tended to be regarded with suspicion and a daughter was expected to accept the husband her mother had chosen for her.

The title of 'A Lesson to Young Girls' alludes to popular plays in which a lesson is taught to different groups of society, for instance Ivan Krylov's (1769–1844) *Urok dochkam* (Lesson to the Daughters), or a play with the title of *Urok volokitam* (A Lesson to Philanderers).<sup>56</sup> Naumova follows the trend of producing a moralistic piece of literature, however using poetry, similar to Bolotnikova, whose poem 'My Butler's Thoughts' may also have been inspired by a scene from a play, as I have suggested in Chapter Five.<sup>57</sup>

'A Lesson to Young Girls' opens with an appeal to young women not to be rash and naive; instead, they are encouraged to regard men's promises with scepticism:

Любезны девушки! страшитесь  
 Всегдашних вы врагов своих,  
 Мужчин коварных берегитесь,  
 Не слушайте ласкательств их;  
 Не редко так, как змей лукавый,  
 Пленивший Евву, нашу мать,  
 Они польстят вам счастьем, славой,  
 А там — ужь поздно горевать.<sup>58</sup>

*Dear girls! You should be wary of*

<sup>55</sup> Natal'ia Pushkareva: 'Russian Noblewomen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18<sup>th</sup> - and Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Memoirs'. In: *Women and Gender in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 111–128 (p. 121).

<sup>56</sup> I. Krylov: *Urok dochkam*. Tipografiia imperatorskogo teatra: St Petersburg 1816.

Krylov's play written in 1807 saw several quite successful private and provincial productions until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As Simon Karlinsky has suggested, this adaptation of Molière's *Les précieuses ridicules* criticized Gallomania. Alexander Shakhovskoi's similarly entitled play *Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody*, became very popular from 1815 in Moscow as well as the provinces, see Simon Karlinsky: *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*. University of California Press: Berkeley L.A. 1985, pp. 182–183; 227; 232–239.

See also N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki*. Pervaia polovina XIX veka. Academica: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoret'skago', pp. 18–22.

<sup>58</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 30).

*Our age-old enemies,  
Protect yourselves from cunning men,  
Ignore their flattery.  
Too often, like the treacherous snake,  
That tricked our mother Eve,  
They promise glory, happiness,  
Then it's too late to grieve.<sup>59</sup>*

The allusion to the snake and the Fall is here contrasted with the more common interpretation of this event, since the weight of the blame is placed on men, who are equated with the snake, and not on women, who are usually held responsible for giving in to temptation. By explicitly calling Eve 'our mother' (nashu mat'), the narrator evokes female solidarity. Later on in the poem, the narrator invokes the supposed maternal authority over a daughter, and appeals to young girls to adopt a rational approach when choosing a husband. Only after careful consideration should a girl give her heart to a man. Naumova's narrator appeals to an audience of young unmarried girls such as those in her care, fulfilling the task of a mother, which is to assist her daughter in her eventual search for a husband.

The lyrical persona warns young women that men rarely show their true face, and to be particularly careful when a man attempts to engage them in courtship. Men are further described as hypocrites and traitors, promising heaven on earth but not keeping their word. The lines are clearly drawn between two camps: men try to mislead and flatter, while women must develop strategies to make it across the mire of delusion and hypocritical machinations. In the narrator's view, courtship is not a frivolous game, but a risky struggle which, if wrongly fought, may ruin a woman's happiness forever.

Courtship is even compared to a kind of war, in which man is the enemy, a reference the lyrical persona makes twice. In Bolotnikova's work, words such as 'raby' (slaves), 'okovy' (chains), and 'tirany' (tyrants) highlight the gravity of the implications of marriage for women. They reappear in Naumova's poem where, however, they do not evoke claims from the domain of civil rights, as in Bolotnikova, but seem to stem from an effort to revise a repertoire of metaphors typical of

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<sup>59</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Sentimentalist love lyrics. To compare the pain of love with 'chains', to call oneself a 'slave' of one's feelings for the beloved, or to regard the desired person as a 'tyrant' were verbal devices commonly used by the *précieuses* of 17<sup>th</sup>-century French salon culture, with which Russian Sentimentalism bears many similarities. Both hinge on a playful conception of courtship and idealise woman as a superior being worthy of adoration. 'A Lesson to Young Girls' exposes the potential impact of this playful understanding of courtship on the lives of women. Naumova reveals the effects of a marriage game in which the adored woman ceases to be the absolute sovereign over a man's feelings, ending up reduced to the status of a slave incapable of removing the fetters and chains of marriage.

Like Bolotnikova, who tried to undermine cultural patterns which idealise women, Naumova's 'A Lesson to Young Girls' criticises courting men for flattering women, and turning into tyrants once they have made their conquest and are married. As an illustration, the narrator refers to Milena and Milon: Milena, the lyrical persona states, was as cheerful as a butterfly, but then dashing, knight-like Milon appeared and captured Milena's heart. Disregarding the advice from those close to her, she has married him and everyone can see her present grief. The description of Milon, who appears in his armour and impresses everyone with his victories, implies that the woman he courts is merely one more trophy. It is the kind of behaviour also denounced in Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women', in which the narrator reproaches the original epistle's anonymous author for regarding women as gifts from the gods but actually treating them disrespectfully.<sup>60</sup> In this context, Naumova's choice of name is also significant as 'Milon' was the name for protagonists of good character in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Classicist drama.<sup>61</sup> In 'A Lesson to Young Girls', the lyrical persona warns that, despite their names, the apparent goodness of the Milons of this world is a sham.

The episode with Milena and Milon in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' deconstructs the pattern established by the genre of the eclogue, which describes the resolution of misunderstandings between two lovers, usually a shepherd and a shepherdess, who eventually profess their love for each other. An important feature of the eclogue is the

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<sup>60</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 52–55.

<sup>61</sup> Joe Andrew: 'Radical Sentimentalism or Sentimental Radicalism? A Feminist Approach to Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature'. In: Kelly Catriona et al. (eds): *Discontinuous Discourses in Modern Russian Literature*. Macmillan: London 1989, pp. 136–156 (p. 140).

dramatic element enhancing the impression of immediacy and distinguishing the genre from the elegy and from the love idyll, where a single poetic persona deplores being unhappy in love. At first sight, 'A Lesson to Young Girls' seems to imitate the eclogue in presenting two lovers and allowing the reader to participate in the most dramatic moment of the love plot: he declares his love, she blushes, love penetrates her breast, she is incapable of hiding her feelings, after which the man is sure of his victory and promises her that she will always be happy with him. Contrary to the typical eclogue pattern, however, a sudden divergence occurs between ideal and reality, and we learn what happens instead of the 'happy ever after' if the spouses are mismatched as a result of the man's false promises. In a striking deconstruction of the genre of the eclogue, Naumova's narrator paints a grim picture of the changes that Milon's treachery has caused in Milena.

Milena's behaviour reproduces the Sentimentalist concept of 'naturalness', which prizes the sincerity of feeling. While this requires men to emulate Erast in Karamzin's *Poor Liza* in pouring out their regret about their lack of goodness, the implication for women is that they must give evidence of their honesty in their deportment. Naumova's Milena is honest, does not hide her feelings, blushes and is confused when Milon declares his love to her. Her body reacts more spontaneously and therefore more 'honestly' and naturally than Milon's, who attempts to conceal his real intentions, and is therefore assumed to be further estranged from nature. In typical Sentimentalist heroine fashion, Milena's response marks her difference as a woman, evidence of her supposedly more 'natural' character. 'A Lesson to Young Women' criticises gender stereotypes by denouncing men's hypocrisy and advising women to use their minds when choosing a spouse rather than relying on emotion as a guide.

In encouraging young women to compare the way men behave at home and in society, the narrator suggests they should adopt a pragmatic, rational approach. Frequent terms associated with notions of truth allude to the veil of falsehood shrouding semi-public salon life: the narrator wonders whether men's words 'rang true' (soglasnal' s pravdoi); she asks young women to make sure they discover men's 'true glory' (istu slavu), and to find out the 'truth' (sprav' tesia vernei) about them. These terms contrast with allusions to fakery, including 'masks' (maski, lichiny), 'act a part' (prityorstvuiut), and 'different words' (inoe [...] drugoe) and 'hold two views'

(dva razlichnykh vida). It takes sophistication to see through the feints and unnaturalness which society life forces on people: as though male behaviour were an object to be studied, the narrator instructs her girls to compare, 'find out' (spravtes'ia), and to 'discover' (uznavajte). Far from regarding women as irrational beings, here they are seen as careful observers who apply logical, rational strategies. This also becomes evident from Naumova's choice of 'to start with' (sperva) and 'then' (togda), terms that enhance the impression that these warnings imply specific instructions — a sharp contrast indeed with the way love and its implications are presented in Sentimentalist novels.

The image of the opposite sex in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' is quite unflattering: men are as false as snakes; they wear masks and pretend to possess positive qualities. Popular prejudice has ascribed such traits to women, who have traditionally been criticised for being two-faced, incomprehensible and busy hatching plots. Naumova's lyrical persona revises this opinion, inverting the pattern and blaming men for these very flaws. She explicitly accuses men of posturing as characters who belie their true selves:

Поверьте — все они Милоны,  
Не свой умеют вид казать:

Любитель Бахуса усердный  
Вам мнится трезвой человек,  
Цирцей боготворитель вредный  
От них представится далек,  
Ревнивец видится безпечным,  
Роскошным кажется скупец,  
А злой тиран добросердечным,  
И самой скромностью — глупец.<sup>62</sup>

*But all of them are Milons, though  
They keep this truth a secret.*

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<sup>62</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 35).

*Even Bacchus's faithful love  
 Will seem a sober man,  
 While Circe's bad admirer seems  
 A million miles from them,  
 An envious man will seem carefree,  
 The miser to splash out,  
 A fool embodies modesty,  
 The tyrant a kind heart.<sup>63</sup>*

In 'A Lesson to Young Girls', the narrator draws a clear distinction between places where men wear masks and where they reveal their true characters. The home and society are two opposing spheres of existence. The fact that Naumova's character encourages her pupils to monitor and analyse the manners displayed by men at home and in society suggests that women were able to move freely between the public and private spheres, and the semi-public sphere of salon culture in particular.

Conflict ensued as Sentimentalist discourse encouraged women to carry the notion of naturalness, which was thought to be an inherently female trait, from the home into the semi-public world of social gatherings. Naumova's narrator advises young women to remember that Sentimentalist ingenuity and naturalness is less than helpful to interpret the semi-public world of social gatherings.

The narrator in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' warns that women's well-being in the private sphere may be affected by men's unnatural behaviour in the public domain, depicting in grim detail the impact of men's pretence and unnaturalness on the intimacy of the home. She attempts to nurture a sense of justice in young women, which Sentimentalist men such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) thought to be lacking in women. Her exhortation to carefully observe and compare male behaviour in the two distinct spheres of the home and worldly society is an effort to establish criteria for the choice of a partner based not only on love, but on a notion of justice common in the public domain. A man's tyrannical or drunken behaviour may have serious consequences in the public arena of civil virtues and justice; the narrator warns women that these flaws are equally intolerable in the intimate sphere of the family

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<sup>63</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

home. I would argue that this is Naumova's attempt to foster something akin to civil awareness in women.

The lyrical persona's aim is not only to show how women were affected in the private sphere of the home by men's unnatural behaviour in social gatherings. She also provides quite specific guidelines to prevent tragedies of the kind suffered by female literary characters such as Karamzin's Liza. Naumova's poem therefore goes beyond simply stating a negative example intended to deter girls from behaving according to patterns outlined in Sentimentalist novels. By instructing young women, 'A Lesson to Young Girls' counterbalances the Sentimentalist view that women are no more than emotional creatures incapable of making rational decisions.

### **The enraged woman teacher of virtue**

The narrator in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' stipulates a sincerity which is not based on naivety and is exercised by men and women alike. Nor are women exempt from the reproach of insincerity, as the final stanza of the poem reveals, in which she warns women:

Не сделайте хамелеоны  
И сами вы для них под час,  
Чтобы и их сердечны стоны  
Во лжи не обличили вас.<sup>64</sup>

*Don't turn into chameleons  
Because you want to please,  
Make sure their heartfelt groans will not  
Discover that you've lied.*<sup>65</sup>

The plea to women to be true to their own selves is a frequent occurrence in Naumova's poetry; it appears, for example, in 'Appeal to Women' and 'Appeal to Russian Women'.<sup>66</sup> Good relations between spouses are something Naumova's

<sup>64</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 37).

<sup>65</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>66</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161; 'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam', pp. 188–193.



narrator is much concerned with and she has made it her chief mission to exhort people to be modest and sincere. In 'Appeal to Women', the narrator explicitly assures her audience that she will not spare them from her desire to expose pretence and to reveal the truth. She declares that she may well have torn the masks from men's faces but that now it is women's turn to hear the truth about their behaviour:

Голубки, душеньки, сестрицы!  
 Про вас я песенку спою.  
 Простите смелость вы певицы,  
 А правду слушайте мою,  
 Как слушали ее мужчины,  
 Когда за вас возстал я,  
 Когда сорвавши здесь личины,  
 Карала Муза их моя.

Но и за них на вас возстану,  
 Как их и вас изобличу,  
 Пред вас Фемидою предстану,<sup>67</sup>  
 Как их и вас я проучу.<sup>68</sup>

*Sweethearts, dearest sisters!*  
*I sing a song of you.*  
*Forgive the boldness of the singer,*  
*But listen to my truth,*  
  
*Just as the men listened to it, too,*  
*When I stood up for you,*  
*When once I'd torn the masks away,*  
*My Muse took them to task.*

*But now I'll stand up to you for them,*

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<sup>67</sup> Themis is the ancient Greek goddess of natural and divine laws; she also presides over good relations between men and women.

<sup>68</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 151).

*Like them, I'll expose you too,  
I put before you Femida,  
I'll teach you a lesson too.*<sup>69</sup>

The narrator accuses women of being coquettish and unfair towards men, and declares women to be accountable for their own choices. She asks women whether it was not they who had chosen their partners, implying that women would have no reason to complain about unhappiness in marriage if they were sensible in courtship and if their behaviour in marriage was sincere.

Later on in the poem, the lyrical persona asks women why they regard men as tyrants, and blames women's hypocrisy for being among the causes why men show the world such hard faces. There is no room for victimisation in this line of argument as both sexes are largely responsible for their own happiness, provided Fate does not interfere — an issue I will discuss further below. The narrator's suggestions and criticism of human behaviour in 'Appeal to Women' betray her strong sense of justice. The fact that she metes out similar chastisements to both sexes may also have been one of the few acceptable ways of expressing criticism of women's situation, for only if she criticised both sexes equally could she be sure not to offend either sex in too obvious a way.

Naumova's lyrical persona often adopts the role of an angry teacher who has set herself the mission of unmasking people's hypocrisy, exhorting them to be modest. This feisty female narrator is a far cry from the gentle and tender woman poet who sings the beauty of God's Creation in earlier Sentimentalist poetry such as Pospelova's. Naumova's portrayal of her narrator as an authoritative and furious woman manifests itself very clearly in the part of 'Appeal to Women' in which the narrator announces her intention of holding up a mirror to all those who do not see their own pretence:

Нет, ни одной я льстить не стану,  
Вам истый облик покажу,  
Вообще противу всех возстану,  
Всем правду смело я скажу.

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<sup>69</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

Вещайте! «робкой Музы лира  
«Тамбуром снова днесь звучит.<sup>70</sup>

*No, I'll not flatter a single one,  
I'll show you the genuine picture,  
And I'll rebel against them all,  
I'll boldly tell the truth to all.  
Tell all, 'the lyre of the timid muse  
Now sounds once more like a drum.'*<sup>71</sup>

It is probably because she wants to fit into the Sentimentalist cliché of female modesty that the lyrical persona calls herself a 'timid muse'. This muse, however, is clearly anything but timid. Vocal, outspoken and enraged, she is the very opposite of the Sentimentalist ideal of the tender and naive girl.

In this part of 'Appeal to Women', Naumova's use of musical instruments is intriguing. The narrator declares that her lyre, her poetry, will be so powerful that it will sound as loudly as a tambourine. In both the opening poem and in 'To the Muses', she dissociates herself from the heroic imagery and loud musical instruments of male-connoted poetic genres, refusing to use the trumpet in order to praise the tsar. When, however, she aims to extirpate arrogance and pretentiousness from this world, her lyre takes on the intensity of a tambourine, a percussion instrument not usually associated with Sentimentalism's images of femininity but frequently used in military bands. By avoiding the trumpet and resorting to the tambourine, Naumova keeps her distance from the Classicist system of genres and their respective metaphors.

Only in 'K pastyriu' (To the Pastor) does Naumova's lyrical persona relinquish her mission to a religious authority. She praises God's servant for fulfilling his duty with astonishing excellence, and — a feature typical of Sentimentalist egalitarian discourse — expresses particular appreciation that he applies similar moral criteria to all classes of society:

Что вижу за осьмое диво?

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<sup>70</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 152).

<sup>71</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

И днесь нашелся человек,  
 Которой истину правдиво  
 Великим, мочным людям рек.<sup>72</sup>

*What do I see as the world's eighth wonder?  
 That now I've found a person,  
 Who told the truth and all the truth  
 To great and powerful people.*<sup>73</sup>

Elsewhere — in 'Appeal to Women', for example — this task falls to the lyrical persona herself. Her muse, the poet's alter ego, becomes a fury, a goddess of revenge driven by a self-imposed mission to exhort the poet to use her writing talent to chastise the depraved and immodest. The narrator presents herself as morally impeccable; her clear conscience shields her from the liars' false accusations:

Мечите стрелы, — я смеюся,  
 И вот пред вами грудь моя.

Вы раните вить не опасно;  
 Безвинна совесть — твердой щит.<sup>74</sup>

*Aim your arrows and I will laugh,  
 And here before you is my breast.*

*But the wounds you give aren't dangerous;  
 A clear conscience is a sturdy shield.*<sup>75</sup>

The arrows and the shield most likely refer to the biblical 'armour of God' and the 'shield of faith' protecting the righteous, an allusion also made by Pospelova as shown

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<sup>72</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K pastyriu', pp. 92–95 (p. 92).

<sup>73</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>74</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 153).

<sup>75</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

in Chapter Four.<sup>76</sup> These examples demonstrate the use female authors make of the Sentimentalist ideal of women as pious and virtuous beings in order to gain access to the public world of authorship.

In 'Appeal to Women', the intentions of Naumova's lyrical persona challenge Sentimentalist gender ideals. Naumova's character holds that both men and women ought to learn how to be virtuous and morally impeccable, applying to both sexes the virtues assigned to girls alone in Sentimentalist discourse. Naumova opens the door of the private realm of the home, allowing supposedly superior female virtues to fly out into the male-dominated public sphere, where she hopes they will leave a lasting mark. In doing so she heeds the Sentimentalist call for women to have a beneficial influence on the morals of children and men. By adopting the role of the female teacher, Naumova's character uses the argument of inherently female moral superiority as a means of entering the public forum. Evidently hoping to instil such superiority in her peers, she steps into the public arena to lecture men and women alike on how to become more virtuous.

### **Queen of Spades vs King of Diamonds**

A powerful female character also appears in Naumova's poem about a visit to a fortune-teller, 'Yesterday's Reading', which includes elements of folk culture and matriarchal pagan beliefs, and illustrates their clash with Christian values.<sup>77</sup> Just as other poems in Naumova's work including 'For my Friend L.N.'s Album' or 'Cupid's Lottery', the poem addresses fate, magic and love intrigues, elements important in salon culture, and of particular significance in women's lives.

In its detailed description of a visit to a fortune-teller, 'Yesterday's Reading' is a literary manifestation of emergent Romanticism's fascination with supernatural phenomena and magic, as Faith Wigzell has shown in *Reading Russian Fortunes*, her comprehensive study on the subject of divination. According to Wigzell, the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century saw an increase in visits to fortune-tellers by both men and women of the fashionable society. Among male authors reported to have visited fortune-tellers, Wigzell lists prominent figures including Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), the most highly acclaimed poet of Russia's Golden Age of literature. Interest in

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<sup>76</sup> Ephesians 6,13:23.

<sup>77</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84.

fortune-telling was reflected in literature, for instance in the fortune-telling scene which opens a story by Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1797–1837), or a clairvoyant's prediction of Pechorin's death, the protagonist in the novel *Geroi nashego vremeni* (A Hero of Our Time, 1839), by Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841). Afanasii Fet (1820–1892) wrote two poems about divination.<sup>78</sup>

Fortune-telling was mostly about love, as suggested by an excerpt from a divinatory orcale popular in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, which includes questions to bachelors, unwed maidens, and married men and women. People who consulted fortune-tellers and oracles wanted to know if their marriage was going to be happy or whether their spouse was faithful.<sup>79</sup> 'Yesterday's Reading' illustrates a divination ritual for girls whose chief interest was to know what kind of husband they were going to have. Knowing about their domestic fortunes mattered greatly to women, as they were more closely bound to the home than men. As Wigzell observes, divination soon became an integral part of women's lives. Hoping to glean predictions of future matrimonial bliss, they entered into divination activities and rituals such as dropping two grease-smeared needles into a bowl of water to predict a couple's future happiness, or a hen pecking at various symbols, or rituals involving mirrors. Some divination activities could only be executed during specific days of the year such as Yuletide when a girl hoping for her future husband to appear to her in her dream would put a magical object such as a herb or fortune-telling cards under her pillow, or when people would pour liquid wax or tin into a bowl of cold water to tell the future by interpreting the resulting shapes. The risk of invoking dark, unclean powers failed to discourage the many practitioners of other popular Yuletide rituals, which, as Wigzell reminds us, again were reflected in literary works: Tat'iana Larina, the protagonist of Pushkin's verse novel *Evgenii Onegin* (Eugene Onegin), practices Yuletide divination, as

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<sup>78</sup> Faith Wigzell: *Reading Russian Fortunes. Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998, p. 52, pp. 118–140.

Karlinsky mentions a comic opera entitled *Kofeinitsa* (The FortuneTeller) by Ivan Krylov, see Karlinsky, p. 180.

<sup>79</sup> Martin Zadek: 'The Ancient and Modern Divinatory Oracle'. In: Geldern, James von / McReynolds, Louise (eds): *Entertaining Tsarist Russia. Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life. 1779–1917*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1998, pp. 12–15. The fascination with the supernatural was also reflected in literary works from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that addressed folk and peasant beliefs, as Christine D. Worobec has shown, see Christine D. Worobec: *Possessed. Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb 2001, pp. 109–147.

For a study of contemporary Russian rural women's folk culture, see Laura J. Olson and Svetlana Adonyeva: *The Worlds of Russian Village Women. Tradition, Transgression, Compromise*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison Wis. 2012.

does Svetlana, the female protagonist of Zhukovskii's (1783–1852) eponymous ballad.<sup>80</sup>

Although foretellings could be obtained by other means including palmistry, cartomancy carried a specifically female connotation: according to Wigzell, women across all spheres of society used cards to tell the future. Pushkin's Tat'iana Larina is a cartomancer, as is Vasilisa Egorovna, a female character in another of his novels, *Kapitanskaia doch'* (The Captain's Daughter, 1836). A feminine alternative to gambling with cards, cartomancy was often viewed as a meaningless, frivolous occupation for the female sex, a notion which prevailed even if both activities were attempts to divine future destinies based on a minimum of information, as Russian culturologist Iurii Lotman suggests.<sup>81</sup> Among the most prominent literary examples of card gaming is Pushkin's novella *Pikovaia dama* (Queen of Spades, 1834), whose protagonist tries to overcome the randomness of the cards by coaxing their secret out of an elderly countess. When the anticipated fortune fails to materialise, however, he loses his mind.

'Yesterday's Reading' is written from the point of view of a woman who consults a cartomancer to find out about her chances of winning the heart of the King of Diamonds. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator affirms her faith in fortune-telling; her belief in the truthfulness of the cards wavers, however, when the clairvoyant declares that an evil woman, the Queen of Spades, is plotting against her:

«Но — вот другая,  
«Пикова дама,  
«Хитро, лукаво  
«Сеет меж их  
«Грусть, сокрушенье

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<sup>80</sup> Wigzell, pp. 52, 118, 140;

L.N. Vinogradova: 'Devich' i gadaniia o zamuzhestve v tsikle slavianskoi kalendarnoi obriadnosti (zapadno-vostochnoslavianskie paralleli)'. In: Tolstoi, Nikita (ed.): *Slavianskii i balkanskii fol'klor. Obriad, Tekst*. Nauka: Moscow 1981, pp. 13–34;

W.F. Ryan / Faith Wigzell: 'Gullible Girls and Dreadful Dreams. Zhukovskii, Pushkin, and Popular Divination'. *Slavonic and East European Review* 70, 1992, pp. 647–669.

<sup>81</sup> Iurii Lotman: '*Pikovaia dama* i tema kart i kartochnoi igry v russkoi literature nachala XIX veka'. *Izbrannye stat'i*, 3 vols. Aleksandra: Tallin 1992, Vol. II, pp. 389–415 (pp. 394–395).

On Gothic features in Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, see

Claire Whitehead: 'The Fantastic in Russian Romantic Prose. Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*'. In: Cornwell, Neil (ed.): *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 1999, pp. 103–125.

«Недоуменье,  
«Ложь и обманы,  
«Ссоры, вражду.<sup>82</sup>

*But here's one more,  
The Queen of spades,  
And sly intrigue  
She sows for them;  
Now sorrow, grief,  
And now confusion,  
Lies, deceit,  
And enmity.<sup>83</sup>*

The narrator admits her belief in the cards despite herself, declaring also that she is unafraid and, supported by her firm belief in the Christian virtues of hope, faith, friendship and love, is ready to face the Queen of Spades' evil machinations. Her conviction is emphasised by her dramatically clasping an anchor in her left hand and a cross in her right. The poem ends on a powerful diatribe against the dark powers embodied by the Queen of Spades, which are diminished by a tempest reminiscent of the Biblical Flood: the Christian values represented by the King of Diamonds prevail.

'Yesterday's Reading' addresses women's fear of being thought irrational due to their belief in the cards. The fear reveals itself when the protagonist declares that her commonsense forbids her to believe what the cards say:

— Будет, довольно;  
Я не желаю  
Горестной правды  
Более знать;  
Здравой разсудок  
Мне запрещает,  
О ворожейка!

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<sup>82</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84 (pp. 76–77). This poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>83</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



Верить тебе.<sup>84</sup>

*It's clear enough  
So spare me from  
Discovering more  
This sorry truth.  
My common sense  
Does not allow  
Me, fortune-teller,  
To believe.*<sup>85</sup>

Here, fortune-telling has become a superstitious act which enlightened, rational people ought to shun. Wigzell observes that few women chose to write about this topic; in order to avoid associations with irrationality, many women authors clearly dissociated themselves from this expression of popular culture, preferring to address more intellectual topics.<sup>86</sup> Naumova pre-empts this by referring to the Christian values which protect her narrator against the Queen of Spades' intrigues.

Two cultural movements — pagan beliefs and Christian values — clash when Naumova's lyrical persona sets her Christian faith, here represented by the King of Diamonds, against the Queen of Spades' machinations. As has been mentioned, the Queen of Spades embodies the dark powers whose origins lie in pagan folklore. 'Yesterday's Reading' exemplifies Joanna Hubbs's thesis in her study, *Mother Russia*, that the strong matriarchal elements in Russian pagan beliefs survived in literary works of the Romantic period and beyond. According to Hubbs, the introduction of a Christian patriarchal doctrine in the 10<sup>th</sup> century met with intense resistance from worshippers of matriarchal pagan cults. If the new patriarchal dogma was to be in any way successful, pre-existing matriarchal rituals had to be adopted and adapted by the new Christian ones. For instance, rather than emphasising the negative image of Eve the Sinner, church officials gave pre-eminence to the positive image of the Mother of God, who soon absorbed the features of venerated female pagan deities including

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<sup>84</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84 (p. 77).

<sup>85</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>86</sup> Wigzell, p. 109.

'rusalki', goddesses of the rivers and forests, and Baba Yaga, the feared yet revered goddess of fertility and death.<sup>87</sup>

In 'Yesterday's Reading', the Queen of Spades is the King of Diamond's adversary. While he is described as someone with a pure and unblemished soul — a wise, kind, friendly, tender and prudent man, a good, angelic-looking king who always smiles — the Queen of Spades is cunning, evil and crafty, and is said to act with trickery and villainy; her 'suit' looks black and ominous. She is the harbinger of destruction, drawing her malicious powers from a realm of darkness, which means that she can conjure up dark clouds, severe storms and perhaps even Hell itself to cause harm to ordinary humans. Naumova's narrator compares the Queen of Spades to a cunning fox, a grass-snake and a toad — powerful images for someone who, according to the plot of the poem, attempts to defeat her (human) rival in order to gain the King of Spades' favour. The emphasis suggests that Naumova aims to represent the Queen of Spades as a most powerful female character.

The machinations of the Queen of Spades in 'Yesterday's Reading' allude to the love intrigues which frequently occurred in salon settings. Other allusions such as the three key symbols of the Christian faith, i.e. the heart, cross and anchor, which frequently appear in friendship albums exchanged in salons, confirm this affinity.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, some of the terms in 'Yesterday's Reading' echo the language used by the *précieuses*. The Queen of Spades, for example, is said to be shooting 'strely kaleny' (burning arrows) and to be pouring 'tletvornoi iad' (noxious poison) into the King of Diamonds' soul. Such expressions were also common in pastoral love lyrics, where a woman's glance was often compared to an arrow piercing and poisoning the heart of her beloved. When saying of the Queen of Spades that she is an evil sorceress who practices black magic, Naumova uses such terms in combination with elements from divination rituals.

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<sup>87</sup> Joanna Hubbs: *Mother Russia. The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1993, p. 96.

The notion of a co-existence of pagan and Christian beliefs is contested by some researchers mentioned by Barbara Alpern Engel in her study: 'Women and Urban Culture'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Lives and Culture*. Open Book Publishers: Cambridge 2012, pp. 19–62 (pp. 44–45).

<sup>88</sup> Gitta Hammarberg: 'Flirting with Words. Domestic Albums. 1770–1840'. In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia — Women — Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 297–320 (p. 307).

The Queen of Spades in 'Yesterday's Reading' evokes the mythical pagan character of Baba Yaga, who makes an occasional appearance in Romantic literary works, for example in a poem by author and folk-song collector, Mikhail Chulkov (1744–1792), about the disappearance of Slavic pagan beliefs.<sup>89</sup> As Hubbs suggests, Pushkin's *Queen of Spades* also evokes Baba Yaga in the character of the old Countess pestered by the male protagonist Hermann to share the secret of the cards with him so he may outwit the power of fate. She lures him into his own trap. When she tells him her secret in a dream, the ace assumes the shape 'of an enormous spider'. As Hubbs argues, the spider 'is known to consume her mate after coupling with him, like the Great Mother Goddesses of archaic times'. In 'Yesterday's Reading', the lyrical persona compares how the Queen of Spades plots intrigues with a spider weaving her web. In other words, the spider-like Queen of Spades threatens the King of Diamonds, symbol of the patriarchal values of Christian dogma.

As Hubbs shows, pagan cults of Baba Yaga also feature a snake or serpent, embodiments of the pagan goddess' (phallic) omnipotence. The Russian cult of St. George most visibly illustrates the threat of 'pagan resistance to conversion' which Baba Yaga poses to the Christian patriarchal belief system.<sup>90</sup> As Hubbs argues, the spear of St. George pierces the serpent, all but eradicating the ancient female cult by the patriarchal system. In the famous Russian equestrian statue of the Bronze Horseman, the evil snake symbolising superstition and resistance to progressive forces is crushed. Naumova's Queen of Spades is a snake who sharpens her sting and attempts to hurt innocent people with her infernal malice. Like the Bronze Horseman of the statue, Naumova's King of Diamonds 'tramples over / The low and base / Lies of the spades.' (Топчет ногами / Пиковой масти / Гнусную ложь).

According to the poem, however, the King of Diamonds' presence and strategies fail to defeat the Queen of Spades' evil powers. Is the narrator to stand a chance against the Queen of Spades' dark machinations, she needs to own the King of Diamonds' Christian virtues. This is why Naumova describes the lyrical persona as a steadfast woman of faithful heart, who can rely on God's approval and protection of the good, the innocent and the upright.

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<sup>89</sup> Iurii Veselovskii: *Literaturnye ocherki*. Tipografiia Vasil'eva: Moscow 1900, pp. 459–485.

<sup>90</sup> Hubbs, pp. 182–222.

People often consulted clairvoyants and folk healers in an attempt to nullify the black magic inflicted by sorcerers and practitioners of the dark arts.<sup>91</sup> The narrator of 'Yesterday's Reading', however, does not ask the clairvoyant to help her reverse the Queen of Spades' evil spell, adopting the folk-healer's role instead and turning herself into a powerful female character. She repeatedly invokes the Queen of Spades throughout the poem, as though conjuring up her evil spirit to demonstrate to her how well her Christian faith has armed her against sinister powers. Like many traditional healers, Naumova's narrator resorts to spell-like incantations to ward off evil, eleven times using expressions that mean 'in vain', such as *tshchetno*, *vtune*, or *ponaprasnu*, and reciting words evoking key Christian symbols such as blessing, bliss and virtue; faith, friendship, hope, love and purity; heaven and humility; the guardian angel, protector and providence; the heart, the anchor and the cross. Underscoring her new role of folk healer, she recites them with great frequency, a strategy which eventually enables her to vanquish the Queen of Spades during a violent storm. In the end God restores Christian order; Christianity triumphs; the pagan powers are destroyed: Baba Yaga's matriarchy must make way for the new patriarchal system.

Naumova's apparent deference to patriarchal values may be regarded as a woman writer's strategy of putting up a smoke-screen of obedience to conceal her rebellion. In keeping with my introduction, however, I would argue that it is the Sentimentalist interpretation of Christianity which enables Naumova to allow Christianity to triumph over pagan beliefs. As outlined in Chapter One, the Sentimentalist image of God was surprisingly feminine and far less patriarchal than previously. Naumova champions an ideal of virtues which originates in Christian belief, stipulating that everyone's chances of attaining moral perfection are equal. At first glance, her Christian god, represented by the King of Diamonds, may be a defender of patriarchal values because he fights the matriarchal pagan goddess. On closer consideration, however, he turns out to have precisely the characteristics which define Christianity as a belief which supports 'feminine' values: he is tenderly loving; he shows kindness and sensitivity; his smile is proof of his humility; he wants virtue to rule the world. I would like to argue that the 'feminine' version of Christianity in Sentimentalism is one of the reasons why Naumova allows Christianity to win in this

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<sup>91</sup> On spells, see Andrei L. Toporkov: 'Verbal Charms against Authorities and Judges in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Russia'. *Russian History* 40 (3–4), 2013, pp. 532–539.

poem. Moreover, she will also have been inspired by the tales of chivalry with their ideals of honesty, braveness, forgiveness, and virtue, which she read as a young girl and which continued to fascinate her throughout her life.

Another reason why Christianity triumphs in 'Yesterday's Reading' is that the powerful character of Baba Yaga was not entirely eclipsed by Christianity, but — as we have seen — transformed into the fervent teacher of virtue, a role frequently adopted by Naumova's female narrators. In this new guise, Baba Yaga has acquired a position of public influence. Just as the Christian figure of Mary absorbed many of the features of influential Russian pagan deities, Naumova's lyrical persona has absorbed some of Baba Yaga's authoritative traits, which further blend with a strong, typically Sentimentalist emphasis on Christian virtue.

### **'Cupid's Lottery'**

The kind of divination rituals described in 'Yesterday's Reading' occurred not only during visits to clairvoyants, but were also practised as a kind of entertainment. Illustrating another important element in Naumova's work, which often reflects the light-hearted salon atmosphere where people made playful attempts to cope with their fate, the salon guests in 'Cupid's Lottery', for example, divert themselves by engaging in divination.<sup>92</sup>

As has been outlined in Chapter Two, salons provided a platform for intellectual exchange. They were also realms of feminine values, flirtation, subtle allusions, and love intrigue. Parlour games, amateur poetry readings, dancing and music made for gallant entertainment. The writing of album entries was another popular salon activity, according to Gitta Hammarberg's study. One of their purposes was to alert young women to the dangers of flirtation, and of being unchaste and unreasonable in their behaviour. Hence, album entries often featured warnings about suitors with dishonest intentions, provided advice — sometimes in the form of a poem — on how to identify such men, and warned girls to 'reject flatterers, old men who declare their passions, important men who try to impress by rank, dandies who sigh a lot, heroes who aim for yet another conquest, or Croesuses who tempt with gold'.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–58. The entire Russian original and an English translation of this poem can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>93</sup> Hammarberg 1996, p. 306;

Gitta Hammarberg: 'Women, Wit, and Wordplay. Bouts-Rimés and the Subversive Feminization of

An integral part of Russian Sentimentalist salon culture was the figure of Cupid, whose statues were offered as presents to women guests. Album inscriptions would make reference to such gifts. Pencil drawings of Cupid accompanied love poems including the following one, which claims Cupid to be far weaker than the woman to whom the verse is addressed:

Не махай божок крылами,  
Преломи колчан свой новый:  
Власть разить сердца стрелами  
Отдана Струговщицей.<sup>94</sup>

*Little god, don't flap your wings,  
Take your new quiver and break it;  
The power to strike at hearts with arrows  
Has passed to Strugovshchika.*<sup>95</sup>

Hammarberg further describes an album entry depicting the goddess Athena leading a child away while blindfolded Cupid is dozing. In the accompanying lines, Athena encourages the child to run away from the perilous little god.

These representations of Cupid illustrate the trivialisation of Classicist metaphors in early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian salon culture. According to Renate Lachmann, gallant love lyrics in general, and the image of Cupid in particular, only began to appear in Russia at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>96</sup> Before that time, Anacreontic or Petrarchan love lyrics, or Medieval *Minnesang* with its sophisticated metaphors in praise of love and women as rulers of men's hearts, were unknown in Russian literature. It was only during the Petrine era, on the back of chivalrous romances and tales of adventure, that

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Culture'. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 61–77. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the poet Vasilii Zhukovskii enjoyed this type of salon culture with its exchanges of albums and diaries, literary games, theatre performances, and musical evenings, see Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> Hammarberg 1996, p. 309. Poem quoted in Latin characters.

<sup>95</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>96</sup> Renate Lachmann: 'Pokin, Kupido, Strely. Bemerkungen zur Topik der russischen Liebesdichtung des 18. Jahrhunderts'. In: Koschmieder, Erwin / Braun, Maximilian (eds): *Slavistische Studien zum VI. Internationalen Kongress in Prag 1968*. Trofenik: München 1968, pp. 449–474.

terminology to express romantic feelings began to be used. Although they did contain some typically Anacreontic metaphors — a woman's gaze compared to arrows wounding the man — they lacked the gallantry of Western European love lyrics. Love was a brutish affair often suspected to be the devil's work, the effect being that woman was perceived as evil rather than a creature worthy of elevation.

It was only in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that this misogynist tendency began to abate. During his stay in Paris in 1730, Vasilii Trediakovskii (1703–1768) became acquainted with Western European love lyrics, and soon claimed to be Russia's first love poet. He draws the typical image of Cupid, the blonde stealer of hearts with his bow, arrow and quiver. Introducing Anacreontic-style love lyrics to Russia in lighter, more pleasant verses, Sumarokov used similar metaphors. Ippolit Bogdanovich's (1743–1803) *Dushen'ka* (1783), featured playful gods — Venus and her son Cupid, in particular. Early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian salon culture saw Cupid in this light-hearted guise, and often associated him with courtship and marriage.

Divination also features in 'Cupid's Lottery'. While adopting a playful tone, the narrator's voice betrays a certain degree of concern for the future conjugal happiness of her protégées. Cupid, the god of love, surprises the assembly by suggesting that they draw lots to find out what kind of person they would marry. The poem echoes a note by Naumova that divination games were among the entertainments offered to her guests.<sup>97</sup> The most likely setting of 'Cupid's Lottery' is a salon, as we can infer from the beginning of the poem, which describes Cupid's sudden appearance, startling the guests:

Вдруг явился перед нами  
 Бог всечтимый, милой, злой;  
 Полон был колчан стрелами,  
 Лук в руках и с тетивой.  
 Испугавшись Амура,  
 Мы вскричали: Купидон!  
 «Что, узнали белокура!»

Нам сказал с усмешкой он,

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<sup>97</sup> Panaev, p. 468.

И примолвил: «Успокойтесь!  
 «Не стрелять в сердца хочу;  
 «Хитрых умыслов не бойтесь:  
 «Мир я с вами заключу.»  
 Золотыми он ключами  
 Отпер кованой ларец,  
 И разсыпал перед нами  
 Он тьму тьмущую сердец.<sup>98</sup>

*Suddenly he stood before us,  
 Much-esteemed, a god who's kind, yet  
 Cruel, his quiver full of arrows,  
 Bow in hand, the string pulled taut.  
 After taking fright at Eros,  
 'Cupid!', we exclaimed aloud.  
 With a laugh he spoke to us,  
 So, you recognized my curls!*

*Then he added, 'Calm yourselves,  
 I don't want to pierce your hearts,  
 Do not fear my cunning tricks,  
 I am here to make my peace.  
 Then he took a golden key,  
 Opened up his tempered casket,  
 Scattered from it at our feet  
 Innumerable little hearts.'<sup>99</sup>*

After Cupid's suggestion that the company should draw lots to settle their matrimonial futures, Naumova provides a complex overview of possible marriage scenarios. Alina's lot, for instance, tells her that she will have a fine, if flighty (vertoprakh) husband, who may mismanage their estate. Alina is hardly better off than Flora, whose future spouse

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<sup>98</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–58 (p. 50).

<sup>99</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



will spend his time — and their fortune — drinking and gambling. Nor will Flena find happiness, because her husband, as wealthy as Croesus, will also be jealous. Men, too, are at the mercy of Fate's cruel game: Liubim's future wife will make evil use of her cleverness, causing his early death. A good match can provide wealth, as Temira's fate shows: her material well-being will be secured by a marriage to an old man whose death will make her a rich widow. Aurora's is one of the few matches in which wealth is irrelevant: due to her interest in poetry, she will meet and eventually marry a pupil of the muses. As on previous occasions, Naumova is careful to underscore the fact that Aurora's future young husband will have been tutored by the muses. In other words, rather than being mere sources of inspiration, they will retain their authority over him.

'Cupid's Lottery' again emphasises the notion of modesty, an important theme which runs through Naumova's collection. The fervent woman teacher of virtue reappears to exhort people to behave with modesty, which can provide happiness. While the notion of modesty in Sentimentalist discourse was chiefly used to glorify female humility, here it serves to expose both men's and women's vices. Arrogant Bogaton, for instance, whose name spells wealth, is punished when his lot predicts that he will end up as a cuckold. Ida's approach to life is more modest, a quality for which she will be rewarded by Fate. Similarly, Liodor is advised to accept his lot and be patient, an attitude which will eventually grant him matrimonial bliss.

Modesty is a virtue which men are most warmly recommended to adopt. This is illustrated by Milovzor's example (his name tells us that he is handsome, from 'milyi', dear, and 'vzor', look), whose looks and great house fail to give him the spiritual comforts afforded by a modest heart. Milovid (whose name also alludes to his physical attractiveness), too, learns that looks matter less than inner values: his bride is quite plain, but modest and insightful, qualities which will ensure his happiness. There are good tidings also for Vsemilov (whose name tells us that he is very dear, from 'vse', all, and 'milyi', dear), whose future wife's heart seems to be untainted by her beauty, intelligence and noble heart, rendering the size of her dowry irrelevant. Cupid's role and presence in 'Cupid's Lottery' combine a classical metaphor with the topic of marriage, which did not feature in Russian love poetry prior to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Naumova depicts Cupid in keeping with his image in early-19<sup>th</sup>-century friendship-album and salon culture, i.e. as a playful and fairly ineffectual character, a

tendency already present in the collection's preceding poem, 'Zhaloby steniashchago Amura' (The Complaints of Moaning Cupid): here the god of love has lost much of his power over people. Despairing that they no longer believe in him, he asks the gods to return people's hearts to him.<sup>100</sup> Cupid's loss of power is even greater in 'Cupid's Lottery'. Here, rather than shooting arrows, he allows people to draw lots, placing the responsibility for their destinies into their own hands. His contribution to the game is reduced to preparing the lots, reducing him from an initiator, the principal driving force of people's love matches, to a mere spectator. As his power has diminished, people seem to have taken ownership of their destinies.

However, they are still not in charge of their own lives: they pick their partners blindly, not knowing whose name is written on their lot. The power they have over their own lives is illusory. Ultimately, it is chance — or fate — which determines the matches that will be made, rather than Cupid's (sometimes sadistic) pleasure, or love, or people's dealings and choices.

In 'Cupid's Lottery' the importance of fate is underscored by the frequent use of words alluding to fate, including *sud'ba*, *sud'bina*, or *zhrebi*. Almost every third stanza contains a reference to fate, emphasising the fact that, despite a rather frivolous allusion to the god of love in the title, the poem addresses the unpredictability of fate and the human desire to catch at least a glimpse of what the future may hold, no matter how futile any attempts to control or regulate one's destiny may be. Fate cannot be defeated, it is inescapable. Cupid's appearance merely provides an amusing interlude. Evidence of his fading importance can be found not only in the reduction of a once powerful allegory to mere mediatorship, but also in his declared wish to make peace with the people he has disturbed. Cupid no longer instils fear — quite unlike the far more terrifying character of Fate which looms on the horizon.

### **'Reproaches to Fate' and 'Fate's Rebuttal'**

The way in which Naumova links the classical character of Cupid with the presence of fate reflects a time of increasing interest not only in divination, but also in folk culture. As a result of this trend, both male and female poets began to combine classical characters with deities, including Fate, which originated in Russian folklore. In early-

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<sup>100</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Zhaloby steniashchago Amura', pp. 46–49 (p. 49).

19<sup>th</sup>-century literature the presence of fate as an uncontrollable force assumed increasing importance. As argued in Chapters One and Two, this may be seen as an expression of the Romantic scepticism about (male) human goodness, signifying individual insecurity in a world shaken by social and ideological crises.

Fate features in several poems of Naumova's collection, most explicitly in 'To Fate' and 'Fate's Rebuttal'.<sup>101</sup> The poems appear in the first third of the collection, which address salon culture and young women's thoughts about marriage. Later in the collection she presents poems which focus on the Sentimentalist topos of loss of friendship and the deconstruction of Sentimentalist poetic genres.

'To Fate' presents a female narrator who expresses her anger about Fate's machinations. The presence of a woman protagonist not only revises the tradition of poems about Fate containing a male lyrical persona, but also the Sentimentalist image of women as humble beings. From the very beginning of the poem, Naumova's female character expresses harsh criticism of Fate:

Скажи, проказница старушка,  
Которую зовут Судьбой!  
Уже ли я тебе игрушка,  
Что так мудришь ты со мной?

То вдруг меня ты приласкаешь,  
То прочь с досадой оттолкнешь;  
То близко к счастью подпускаешь,  
То в пропасть лютых бед столкнешь.<sup>102</sup>

*Tell me, whimsical old lady,  
Whom we usually know as Fate!  
Do you see me as a plaything,  
Since you treat me in this way?*

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<sup>101</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64;  
'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75.

The poems in Russian and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>102</sup> Naumova, 1819, 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64.

*Now you see fit to caress me,  
 Now, annoyed, push me away,  
 Now you let me near to joy, yet,  
 Now I'm back to misery.<sup>103</sup>*

Fate is accused of unpredictability in the way she treats the protagonist, casting her from one extreme to the other, sometimes surrounding her with friends, then depriving her of them, placing her in evil company instead. In contrast to Urusova's poem on Fate mentioned in Chapter Two, Fate does not appear as a benevolent female presence. Rather, the narrator calls Fate a 'whimsical old lady' who treats people as little more than plaything (*igrushka*) and who is almost as careless and sadistic to humans as the Cupid of classical literature. Later on Fate is a terrifying creature who shakes her head wildly and is cruel towards people, the narrator in particular, who further complains that whenever Fate visits her cabin she takes something away — happiness, peace, health — until the only thing left is hope, which our protagonist categorically refuses to relinquish.

The poem conjures up the image of a powerful female character in conflict with Christian values, a feature we have already observed in 'Yesterday's Reading'. The narrator admonishes Fate to remember her place in the heavenly hierarchy:

Ты сколько ни грозись, не можешь  
 Противу правды ничего;  
 Ты истину не переможешь.  
 Убойся Бога самого!

*Nothing that you say can change,  
 Do anything against the truth.  
 You cannot change reality,  
 And even you fear God himself.*

These lines contain a hidden reproach that Fate did not conform to Christian precepts. The same view is reflected in the narrator's bold assertion that Fate will never be able

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<sup>103</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

to quash hope — a key element of Christian doctrine — and that she is powerless against (Christian) truth. The narrator is far from showing the humility displayed in Urusova's 'To Fate'. On the contrary, she quite audaciously tells Fate to do better by teaching the crafty rather than punish the innocent, and is bold enough to remind Fate of her duties.

The next poem is 'Fate's Rebuttal'. It is Fate's reply to the complaint voiced by the narrator of 'To Fate'. By presenting an actual confrontation between Fate and the lyrical persona, Naumova's work differs from poems by Kheraskov, L'vov or Dmitriev mentioned in Chapter Two, in which Fate is mute and fails to respond to human threats and criticism.

Did Naumova know the works of the above-mentioned three authors? Was she familiar with their presentations of Fate? We may never know. Her inspiration to provide a different image of Fate may stem from her knowledge of folk culture and divination rituals; she may not necessarily have made a deliberate attempt to revise their images of Fate. In 'Fate's Rebuttal', Fate appears in the flesh — active, full of terrifying rage and power. She is a fierce woman unlike any the world has ever seen and, as the first stanza of the poem reveals, even in old age displays the agility of a much younger woman:

Старуха предо мной явилась,  
 Каких не видывал и свет;  
 Нахмуря брови, так бодрилась,  
 Как женщина во цвете лет.  
 Ко мне взор строгой обращает,  
 Ты вызов сделала Судьбе?  
 Она с надменностью вещает:  
 Я здесь ответственать тебе.<sup>104</sup>

*An aged woman appeared before me,  
 The like the world has never seen,  
 With knitted brow, her spirits fine,  
 She's like a woman in her prime.*

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<sup>104</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75.

*She looks at me, her countenance stern,  
Are you the one who challenged Fate?  
She haughtily lays down the law:  
I've come to answer your complaint.*<sup>105</sup>

There is a moment of surprise when Fate suddenly stands not just before the lyrical persona but the reader as well. The narrator does not expect Fate to appear; any complaints uttered against her seem to belong to the usual repertoire of this topic.

In addition to granting Fate an unexpected appearance, 'Fate's Rebuttal' offers a detailed description of Fate's various activities. She is portrayed as a busy woman in charge of the wheel of fortune, who, although prepared to reply to the lyrical persona from the previous poem, is annoyed and distracted by people's never-ending complaints against her. Naumova's Fate wields impressive power; she is virtually omnipotent, flying like a bird in order to foresee everything and to reach everywhere in time. If in Pospelova's poetry the universe was firmly in the hands of a male god, in Naumova's work Fate has taken over and is in charge of the whole world:

Я всей вселенною верчу;  
Там милую, а здесь караю, —  
Творю, что только захочу.

Ненастье в ведро обративши,  
В день ясный насылаю гром;  
Как лужу море возмутивши,  
Из тишины творю содом;  
Царей я делаю рабами,  
Рабов в вельможи вывожу;  
Явлю безумцев мудрецами,  
Героя в трусе покажу.

*I have the world to spin around.*

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<sup>105</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*While here I punish, there I'm kind,  
I do whatever comes to mind.*

*I whip a storm up in a teacup,  
Send thunder on a summer's day;  
I churn the sea like it's a puddle,  
Make Sodom where before peace reigned.  
Then I'll transform kings into slaves,  
While slaves turn out to be grandees,  
I make a fool appear a wise man,  
Expose the hero in the coward.*

These lines allude to the wheel traditionally associated with Fortune, which also features in Bolotnikova's poem, 'K nei zhe' (To the Same Woman), where Fortune and her wheel fly into the houses of the wealthy.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to Bolotnikova, Naumova takes great care to depict all the dramatic effects of Fate's turning her wheel. As the following display of her power demonstrates, Fate has very nearly recovered the ancient Fates' power over human lives (see Chapter One):

Мной каждому не понапрасна  
Определение дано.  
Даю, беру и возвращаю  
Блаженство, славу и покой;  
Тому польщу, сему стращаю,  
Сих тешу, тех крушу тоской.<sup>107</sup>

*You'll all receive, all without fail,  
Your destiny worked out by me.  
I give, I take, and I give back,  
Now bliss, now fame, now peace and quiet,  
I favour one, but scare another,*

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<sup>106</sup> Bolotnikova, 'K nei zhe', pp. 41–43 (pp. 42–43).

<sup>107</sup> Naumova 1819, p. 67.

*Help some, others crush with sorrow.*<sup>108</sup>

Although she is mighty, Fate strongly objects to the accusation of ignoring Christian dogma, correcting the obviously misguided lyrical persona by referring to God as her superior:

Я действую по Божьей воле,  
А вы творите по моей;<sup>109</sup>

*I act according to God's will,  
And you in turn are ruled by mine;*<sup>110</sup>

The heavenly hierarchy remains intact even though the lines in which Fate asserts her autonomy vastly outnumber the mere two lines given to this acknowledgement of the patriarchal Christian order.

The very act of speaking in her own voice is an emancipatory step, as becomes apparent if we compare Naumova's Fate with the representation of Fortune in Volkova's poem, 'Chelovek i vremia' (Person and Time), where God speaks directly, claiming authority over Fortune: 'Lish' ia Edinnyi upravliu Fortuny shchedroi rukoi' (I alone govern Fortune with a generous hand).<sup>111</sup> Naumova's Fate is more independent than Fortune and on a superior hierarchical level: a metaphor for wealth has been transformed into an autonomous authority over human lives.

Another sign of Fate's newly acquired authority is the way in which her chariot is described. There is a clear difference between descriptions of the chariot in Volkova's more conservative 'Razmyshlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastiia' (Reflection on the Vicissitudes and Inconstancy of Luck), and Naumova's more progressive 'Fate's Rebuttal'. In Volkova's poem, Fortune is not explicitly in command, whereas Naumova's Fate is very clearly in charge, demonstrating her authority when she describes her task of steering the chariot as 'no joke' (ne shutka pravit' kolesnitsei).

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<sup>108</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>109</sup> Naumova 1819, p. 68.

<sup>110</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>111</sup> Anna Volkova, 'Chelovek i vremia'. *Otchet imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteki za 1892 god* 39, 1895, p. 105.



### **The lessons taught by Fate**

Naumova's Fate forces people to learn life's lessons, as she states when saying that all will grow wiser from experience, and will stop hurting other people's feelings. The advice to learn from experience is a key feature in the prevailing Medieval representations of this demi-goddess, who instructed people to learn from her by observing and accepting her dealings. As outlined in Chapter One, no-one dared to argue with Fortune, let alone attack her. Naumova's allegory is frighteningly intense and therefore bears greater resemblance to the Medieval image, which was quite common until Renaissance man's will to power attempted to overcome and suppress this incarnation of female authority, resulting in a tamer, Machiavellian personification. However, Naumova does not reproduce the idea of Fate as a negligent mother or sexually provocative woman.

The lesson taught by Naumova's Fate is that humans must take responsibility of their own lives. At first this may seem paradoxical; after all, it is precisely Fate's influence which prevents people from making autonomous decisions. They are even strongly advised to accept her dealings, but this does not result in mere passivity. Within the limits of Fate's machinations, people are responsible for their lives to the extent that they cannot blame the consequences of mentally immature behaviour on Fate. This attitude manifests itself in Fate's reproach to the lyrical persona for having naively, even blindly welcomed manipulative, deceitful people into her life. Fate also declines responsibility for the lyrical persona's temper which often drives her to expose her fellow men and women's lies, behaviour which disrupts friendship and isolates the narrator.

Naumova frequently warns young girls in particular not to trust others blindly. This warning's repeated occurrence here is evidence of the scepticism with which women began to perceive the Sentimentalist ideal of femininity. When Fate states that it is no longer fashionable to speak the language of the heart, she addresses a subtle warning to the lyrical persona, perhaps expressing a typically Sentimentalist regret for the loss of a mythological Golden Age when people's behaviour was directed by sincere feelings only. On the other hand, Fate's warning against innocent trustfulness may indicate that Sentimentalist aesthetics of female ingenuity and innocence have now become obsolete.

If Fate scolds the narrator for being too trusting, she also subtly hints at her moral superiority. However, Naumova cannot distance herself completely from the Sentimentalist pattern, conforming, at least to some extent, to the ideal of the guileless, ingenuous, morally pure woman. In 'Fate's Rebuttal', for example, she adopts the Sentimentalist view that women are driven by innate goodness and therefore virtuous by nature. On the other hand, she also has Fate scold her narrator for being too naive. In other words, she expresses a critical view of the ideal of the perfectly moral, trusting and virtuous creature who resembles Karamzin's Liza. When her character steps into the public sphere adopting the pose of the angry woman teacher of virtue, Naumova subverts Sentimentalist expectations of women in order to make her point.

In contrast to the way in which many male authors tried to cope with Fate, i.e. by repressing the female element (see Chapter One), Naumova's Fate calls on both men and women to make sensible life decisions, granting them some (limited) autonomy. However, if they want to make use of it, any gender distinctions between the naturally innocent and trusting (female) group and the controlling, rational (male) one must be abolished.

Naumova's work supports the view that no good can possibly result from the kind of ingenuous behaviour and ill-considered decisions Sentimentalist culture expected from women. The principle of equality helps Fate accomplish one of her most important tasks, which is to establish positive relations between spouses.

Naumova's Fate also presents herself as a teacher of virtue when announcing that she will make people live more modest lives:

Заставлю жить я поскромнее  
И добродетель уважать;  
Все ставши опытом умнее,  
Не будут ближних обижать;  
Старухи умничать не станут,  
Повес проклятых усмирю;  
Кокетки мудрить перестанут,

Мужей с женами примирю.<sup>112</sup>

*I make them live more modestly,  
Make them hold virtue in esteem,  
Once wiser from experience,  
They won't offend dear ones again;  
Old women won't start getting clever,  
I'll deal with all the wretched rakes;  
Coquettes will stop their scheming ways,  
Husbands and wives will make their peace.*<sup>113</sup>

The fact that this was also a central matter of concern for Naumova's angry muse is suggested by 'Appeal to Women', where the muse threatens to tell the truth, rising against everyone, or declares that she will teach women as she has taught men.<sup>114</sup>

Naumova's Fate displays maternal features; she is in charge of directing and instructing all of humanity: Naumova's alter ego attempts to provide guidance to her protégés. 'Fate's Rebuttal' may well be a response to the idealised early-19<sup>th</sup>-century view of mothers as the protectors of virtue and teachers of morals (see Kelly's study on manners, motherhood and moral education).<sup>115</sup> Rather than expressing an effort to conform to literary Sentimentalist ideals about women, Fate's repeated emphasis of the importance of virtue in Naumova's poem may also be an expression of this socio-cultural trend.

At the end of 'Fate's Rebuttal', Fate asks the narrator not to bother her with any more complaints, telling her not to behave as foolishly as other people who complain about their lives, yet do not want to accept or understand Fate's lessons. Intimidated by Fate's speech, the narrator promises not to repeat her mistake but to live a more humble life.

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<sup>112</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75 (74).

<sup>113</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>114</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 151).

<sup>115</sup> Kelly shows the contemporary idealisation of motherhood in a poem by Zhukovskii dedicated to the Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna (1798–1860) on the birth of one of her children in 1818. The poem praises royal maternity as 'loving watchfulness and protection against harm, rather than active intellectual guidance', and draws a parallel between the royal mother and Fate, both being 'all-seeing' and charged with protecting their children. Kelly also argues that 'virtue was essential as a means to independence; it was not primarily an instrument of female subjugation'; see Kelly 2001, p. 5, p. 17.

A comparison of Naumova's poems on Fate with Urusova's poem on the same subject (see Chapter Two) shows that both authors reach similar conclusions: they accept the dealings of Fate, forcing their protagonists to go through a learning process. Impertinent at the beginning and rebellious against Fate's influence, both eventually acknowledge Fate's power.

Where the two authors differ is in how they present this process. In keeping with the pietistic doctrine of her day, Urusova's protagonist has begun to understand and appreciate Fate's secret, wise dealings and stops complaining about Fate. The tone of the poem becomes meek and humble. In contrast, Naumova's writings are indignant in tone, and her character is not in a pietistic state of self-contemplation. Despite a conclusion almost identical to Urusova's, Naumova may well have chosen such a radically different road towards acceptance of Fate's lessons because she wanted to portray a powerful female character.

Naumova's Fate therefore personifies the dark powers that man, having realised that divine providence does not exist and nature cannot provide virtue, was to struggle with during Romanticism. The presentation of Fate as a frightening and outspoken woman may well have been inspired by Naumova's affinity with folk culture reflected elsewhere in her work, for instance in the two folk-song inspired poems mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, i.e. 'The Young Woman Walked across the Field', and 'Russian Songs', which features the folk character of the bird-girl.<sup>116</sup> As has been said before, divination may have been another source of inspiration for Naumova's Fate.

The portrayal of Fate as a powerful character may also have been Naumova's reaction to the cult of masculinity which underpinned Sentimentalist discourse and its distinction between a private world of feminine virtues and a public sphere of civil virtues reserved for men. Naumova's Fate is no domestic angel but a frightening and dark character who disrupts the Sentimentalist gender dichotomy; she is the 'madwoman in the attic' who has refused to stay locked in, to echo the iconic phrase from Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study on women writers and literary imagination.<sup>117</sup> As uncontrollable as Baba Yaga, she can be as cunning and mischievous

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<sup>116</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Russkia pesni', pp. 38–39;

'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila', pp. 40–43.

<sup>117</sup> Sandra Gilbert / Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1979.

as the Queen of Spades in 'Yesterday's Reading'. Fate stands for the irrational fear of a female element of disorder which men have attempted to annihilate. She claims a voice and a position of her own in a universe of male republican ideals which have tried to control her. At a time when mythological patricide seemed to repeat itself in the Decembrist plans to abolish the tsar's power, the reappearance of an overpowering mother figure suggests that these ideals of manliness were based on a doubtful gender dichotomy.

As I have noted, Naumova placed this revision of Sentimentalist gender patterns in the first third of her collection. Subsequent poems also question Sentimentalist literary models, for example when the lyrical persona deconstructs the cliché of the carefree country maiden. The last third of Naumova's anthology features poems whose protagonists express their opinions on socio-political topics such as the dangers of free-thinking. The collection concludes on a calmer note and gentler tone, with epitaphs commemorating people close to Naumova.

### **Summary: A woman in charge**

This chapter has explored the ways in which women authors such as Naumova articulated the impact of representations of femininity on women during the dying days of Sentimentalist discourse and the emerging Romanticism of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. I have argued that the female character of a teacher of virtue was instrumental to Naumova's endeavour to disrupt literary and cultural patterns which objectified women, idealising them for their alleged innate goodness. An angry muse was an instrument of questioning and rewriting literary characters such as Karamzin's Liza, or Sappho, or the (usually mute) female to whom a Sentimentalist man disappointed in love addresses his complaints in Gessner-style elegies and love idylls.

My study has also shown that, in focusing on salon culture and courtship, Naumova addresses spheres of life which often set the course for women's matrimonial destiny. Her poems suggest that it was possible for a woman to disregard the boundaries between public and private, disguising her rebellion by adopting a virtuous stance, adhering to Christian values, and calling for sincerity, rationality and equality in both sexes. In poems which address traditional folk practices such as divination and cartomancy, Naumova gives a voice to powerful female characters reminiscent of Baba Yaga and evocative of pagan mythology.

Naumova's portrayal of Fate as an outspoken, wilful demi-goddess whom mere humans are unable to control, challenges Sentimentalist notions of women as meek creatures, and is an expression of Romanticist gender dichotomy. By calling on men and women to act within their boundaries and to make rational decisions, Naumova's work revises conceptions about social interaction in which woman alone is required to embody virtue.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to explore women authors' responses to Sentimentalist literary conventions as they manifested themselves in Russia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the study has shed light on the lives and works of three Russian women writers who have so far been marginalised or overlooked by literary history. Their writings reveal various ways in which women perceived, and responded to, their society's political, cultural, and aesthetic concepts.

Inspired largely by the writings of republican thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, these concepts included the creation of a public world of politics for men, and a private world of feelings for women, as well as a belief in democratic and egalitarian principles which led to an increasing popularity of the notion of the unconditional value of each human and, hence, to a critical view of the institution of serfdom and of the social inequality of women. However, increasing criticism of the latter did not bring about fundamental revisions of traditional gender patterns.

On a cultural level, salons offered a platform for intellectual exchange for both sexes. In literature, Sentimentalism's essentialist assumptions manifested themselves in the worship of nature, a belief that women were alienated from culture and had a duty to embody harmony and virtue. These values found their most prominent expression in the genre of the pastoral, where the traditional function of female characters was to arouse male poetic feelings.

Sentimentalist nature worship is reflected in works by women writers such as Mariia Pospelova, who reproduced deistic and pantheistic ideals and who considered the poet to be a virtuous interpreter of Creation. Pospelova adopted the idealised Sentimentalist image of femininity, presenting her female personae — including the authorial narrator — as angelic creatures receptive to Creation's divine essence and capable of experiencing spiritual illumination. While this conceptualisation of her narrators gave Pospelova symbolic authority and legitimacy as a writer, it disabled her, however, from articulating conflict. In her pastorals, feelings of disharmony and distress are only expressed by the male voice. Female literary characters, by contrast, express such feelings only in moralising reflections which eventually re-establish woman's function of symbolising happiness and paradise.

Another chapter focused on Mariia Bolotnikova and the use which this provincial woman poet made of the Sentimentalist elevation of nature and woman's

alleged alienation from culture to justify her taking up the pen despite living far from any of Russia's cultural centres. My analysis of her poems suggests that they enabled her to voice her opinion on subjects which would have been difficult for her to address in any other genre. In particular, I have examined Bolotnikova's references to the then hotly-debated egalitarian principles which exemplify echoes of the democratic potential of Sentimentalism in works by other women writers, and the opportunities for feminist criticism provided by those debates.

Unlike Pospelova, Bolotnikova used Sentimentalism's elevated regard for nature as an argument to support her call for a relationship between the sexes based on mutual respect rather than patriarchal authority; she questions Sentimentalist men's idealisation of femininity, exposing elements of Sentimentalist discourse which objectify women in a way similar to Western European courtly love. She challenges the Karamzin-inspired image of women as naive girls unable to learn from bad experiences. It is only in her attitude to serfdom that Bolotnikova's progressive criticism of a patriarchal system falters. While she does give a voice to a serf dissatisfied with his idle mistress, her writings do not suggest that she wished to see fundamental changes to the social system. In fact, she can be said to adopt the attitude common among the contemporary ruling class.

The work of Anna Naumova constitutes a considerable departure from the Sentimentalist equation of woman with nature. My analysis of her poems shows the author taking issue with Sentimentalist man over his simplified view of women as carefree country maidens, deconstructing the topos of the shepherdess who knows no sorrow, serves mainly as an object for the man's elegiac monologues, and blossoms like a flower in an idyllic setting. In one response to the imitation of a Sentimentalist love idyll, she upbraids the male protagonist for cultivating unrealistic ideas about women. Elsewhere, she reproaches the man for not questioning his own courtship behaviour while accusing his beloved of being callous and unfaithful. Just like Bolotnikova, for whom a harmonious matrimonial life was an important topic, Naumova is also concerned about the impact of courtship and marriage on women's lives. However, rather than emulating Karamzin in casting women as victims by showing pity for a fallen girl, Naumova's narrator advises women to be mindful when choosing a husband. In doing so, she was most likely inspired by salon and friendship-album culture, where these topics were frequently addressed.



Naumova further challenges Sentimentalist representations of female characters by dissociating herself from the myth of Sappho's death. Her narrator declares that she prefers to write, taking inspiration from disappointment, rather than ending her life in an ocean of oblivion, as the legend about the Greek poet suggests. Here Naumova reverses Sentimentalist gender roles according to which woman was the mute object of adoration by a man deploring the absence of his beloved in elegiac monologues. In Naumova's poetry, woman is encouraged to voice emotional conflict; the man is deprived of this traditional privilege.

Moreover, in Naumova's work, the female character of the 'writing muse' is transformed from Sentimentalism's gentle and receptive interpreter of Creation into a fervent teacher of virtue. The muse is an outspoken woman who has ventured into the world to expose people's hypocrisy and lecture them about their unnatural behaviour in society. Naumova embraces Christianity's egalitarian aspect by appealing to all, regardless of rank or gender, to strive for moral self-perfection.

Presenting her protagonist as a perfectly virtuous woman was one of the ways in which a woman author was able to uphold the Christian value system cherished by Sentimentalist pietists while nevertheless crossing the boundaries between her private sphere and the public arena of authorship. As the works of both Pospelova and Naumova demonstrate, however, this did result in excessively moralising tones.

While Pospelova's female characters were set in idyllic landscapes and functioned as interpreters of a world created by a male God, Naumova has revised the subordinate role of woman. In some of her poems, ancient matriarchal and pagan folk practices clash with Christianity's patriarchal belief system: the authoritative folk character of Baba Yaga adopts a Christian guise; popular divination rituals illustrate the importance of Fate as the personification of existential individual uncertainties experienced in the emerging Romanticism. Challenging the Sentimentalist image of the female protagonist who is not in control of her life and who dies having failed to live up to the expectations of a male-dominated culture, Naumova's portrayal of Fate presents an authoritative female character who is in charge of the entire universe and, in a manner reminiscent of the ancient Fates, determines the turns of human lives.

I would argue that Fate in Naumova's writings functions as an opponent both to the idealised Sentimentalist image of femininity and to the masculinist ideals of emerging Romanticism. The disruptive female character of Fate was Naumova's

reaction to a civic brotherhood in a republican state which, in Machiavelli's and Rousseau's writings, served as a defence against the private and the feminine. Fate, the epitome of irrationality attributed to women, was regarded as a threat to the stability of the republican order, resulting in efforts to confine women to the contrasting moulds of angel or madwoman, not to mention the far more ancient dichotomy of woman as either Eve or angel, Holy Mother Mary or Jezebel the whore. In allowing Fate to escape from her confinement, Naumova presents an alternative to the gender-specific dichotomy created by male republican political philosophers. She suggests that humans try to act within the limits of their circumstances and do not attempt to control the vagaries of life by putting unrealistic expectations upon one sex. She also encourages readers to learn from life's lessons rather than resorting to Sentimentalism's radical gender paradigm which forces women to give up their existence if they come into conflict with the Sentimentalist ideal of female naturalness.

The history of Russian literature has addressed the question of the natural and spontaneous nature of woman's artistic creation on numerous occasions. I would like to conclude my study with the following observations, which apply across and beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Women have often been criticised for taking an excessively rational approach to writing. For instance, a critic condemned a poem composed by Anna Bunina on the death of a woman friend, saying that it was a reflection on life and death rather than the more appropriate expression of womanly sentiment.<sup>1</sup> However, it was not only men who reproached women authors for a lack of emotion in their writings. As the polemics between Evdokiia Rostopchina and Karolina Pavlova illustrate, women disapproved of works by other women writers for the same reasons. Rostopchina held that poetry should be the result of a spontaneous outpouring of emotion rather than of intellectual work, and should originate in the female domain of salon life.<sup>2</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a similar type of argument developed between Anna Akhmatova and Nadezhda L'vova. In her overview of the emergence of women's writing in Russia, 'Kholod utra' (The Dawn Chill, 1914), L'vova faults Akhmatova's poems for sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki. Pervaia polovina XIX veka*. Academia: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Vowles: 'The Inexperienced Muse. Russian Women and Poetry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In: Barker, Adele / Gheith, Jehanne (eds). *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2002, pp. 62–84 (p. 75).

lacking formal mastery.<sup>3</sup> In a review of L'vova, Akhmatova counters the reproach, claiming that L'vova had 'destroyed her tender talent' by forcing her thoughts into specific poetic forms.<sup>4</sup>

These examples show that women have felt ill at ease with either conceptualisation of them: on the one hand, women's social experiences often diverge from those of men; they require a different approach to artistic creation, with regard to both content and form. On the other hand, not least because 'female' spheres and topics are regarded as secondary to the public sphere, women refuse to be confined to them.

My study has been an attempt to identify early manifestations of this dilemma in the works of Sentimentalist women authors. I have provided examples of women writers who subscribe to this dichotomy, and of women who use or reject certain elements of it. I hope to have portrayed them in a light that does not cast them in the role of victims, presenting them instead as authors who operated skilfully and autonomously within the codes and confines imposed by the discourse of their time.

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<sup>3</sup> Nadezhda L'vova: 'Kholod utra. Neskol'ko slov o zhenskom tvorchestve'. *Zhatva* 5, 1914, pp. 249–256 (p. 255).

<sup>4</sup> Anna Akhmatova: 'O stikhakh N. L'vovoi'. *Russkaia mysl'* 35, 1914, pp. 27–28 (p. 28).

## Appendix

### Pospelova

ВАШЕ ИМПЕРАТОРСКОЕ ВЫСОЧЕСТВО! ВСЕМИЛОСТИВЕЙШАЯ ГОСУДАРЫНЯ!<sup>1</sup>

Слава, спутница добродетелей, украшающих человечество, повсюду гремющая о превосходных дарованиях и Ангельских добродетелях души Вашей, дает мне смелость принести *Вашему Императорскому Высочеству* первые плоды трудов моих. Имя Ваше будет украшением оных; и я льшу себе надежду, что Серафинская душа Ваша удостоит благосклонного приятия жертву усердной Россиянки.

Сколь восхитательна, сколь сладостна для меня мысль сия, что чувства и мысли мои относительно к религии и добродетелям, помещенные в небольших разсуждениях, будут открыты пред очами Вашего Императорского Высочества! Я надеюсь, что Вы по благосклонности великим душам свойственной, извините недостатки и погрешности, в сочинении моем находящиеся, и великодушно простите, что между прочим поместила я некоторыя безделки – рисунки моего воображения в свободные часы мною начертанные.

*Your Royal Highness! Most Munificent Sovereign! Glory, the traveling<sup>2</sup>  
companion of virtue, adorning humanity, everywhere ringing forth Your superior  
gifts and the angelic virtues of Your soul, grants me the courage to present to  
Your Royal Highness the first fruits of my works. Your name shall be adorned by them;  
and I flatter myself with the hope that Your Seraphic soul will consider it worthy to  
kindly accept this sacrifice by a zealous Russian maiden.*

*How enchanting, how sweet for me is the notion that my thoughts and  
feelings about religion and virtue, included in these small musings, will be  
revealed to the eyes of Your Royal Highness! I hope that You, with the kindness of a  
great soul, will forgive the shortcomings and imperfections that are found in my  
compositions and will mercifully forgive me for incidentally including several trifles—  
pictures of my imagination sketched in my free hours.*

<sup>1</sup> Mariia Pospelova: *Luchshie chasy zhizni moei*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Vladimir 1798, [n.p.].

<sup>2</sup> Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, p. 348.

**Майское утро<sup>3</sup>**

Прелестной свет зари багряной  
 Восточной край небес покрыв,  
 Разсыпал блеск лучей румяной,  
 От сна Природу возбудил.

В одежде утренней прелестной,  
 Явились ея красы.  
 Какой приятностью любезной  
 Наполнены сии часы!

Земля и небеса сияют  
 Пленяющей глаза красой.  
 Все виды прелестьми блистают  
 И дух в восторг приводят мой.

Свет — жизнь творения и радость  
 От нас мрак ночи удалил;  
 Прогнав забвение, он сладость  
 В сердцах живущих возбудил.

Уже прятной Гимн воспели  
 По рощам птички и полям.  
 Играют пастухи в свирели;  
 Стада гуляют по лугам.

Луга, покрытыя цветами,  
 Блестящая роса поит.  
 Ручей, кристальными струями  
 Вияся по песку журчит.

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<sup>3</sup> Pospelova 1798, 'Maiskoe utro', pp. 73–74.

Наполнен воздух ароматным,  
Прелестным запахом цветов,  
И с шумом ветерок приятным  
Резвясь летает средь лугов.

Из рощей тени удалились.  
Луч солнечной проник в леса;  
Его лучами озлатились  
Зелены, светлы древеса.

Как мило все и как приятно,  
Как чисты, ясны небеса!  
Ах! сердцу нежному понятно,  
Сколь утра сладостна краса.

Все, все веселием сияет,  
Все дышит радостью одной.  
С улыбкой кажется встречает  
Природа Майский день молодой.

Красой, величием разящих,  
Разлив тьму блесков наконец  
В сиянии лучей блестящих  
Явился светлый дня отец.

Сколь много сердце восхищает  
Сиянье красоты его!  
Сколь много душу возвышает  
Великость зрелища сего!

**May Morning<sup>4</sup>**

*The lovely light of crimson dawn  
 Covered the sky's eastern edge,  
 Scattered the rosy brilliance of its rays,  
 And awakened Nature from her sleep.*

*Her beauty is displayed  
 In this charming morning attire.  
 With what sweet pleasantness  
 These hours are filled!*

*The earth and sky shine  
 With a beauty that enchants the eye.  
 Every vista sparkles with charm  
 And enraptures my spirit.*

*Light—that joy and soul of creation—  
 Removes from us the gloom of night.  
 Having chased away oblivion,  
 It awakens sweet delight in living hearts.*

*Already little birds have sung a pleasant hymn  
 O'er the fields and groves.  
 Now shepherds play the reed.  
 Herds wander o'er the meadows.*

*The meadows, blanketed in flowers,  
 Are bathed in shiny dew.  
 The brook babbles,  
 Its crystal current winding along the sand.*

*The air is filled with the flowers'*

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<sup>4</sup> Ewington, pp. 357–359.

*Lovely fragrance*

*And the light wind, with a pleasant whisper,  
Rushes along, frolicking amidst the meadows.*

*Shadows have withdrawn from the groves.*

*A ray of sun has penetrated the forest.*

*Its rays have turned the bright  
Green trees to gold.*

*How delightful everything is and how pleasant.*

*How pure and clear are the skies!*

*Ah! a tender heart understands  
How sweet is morning's beauty.*

*Everything shines with merriment;*

*Everything breathes joy alone.*

*It seems that Nature greets the young May day  
With a smile.*

*In all his majesty and beauty,*

*Spreading myriad sparks of light*

*The bright father of day appears*

*Shining in his brilliant rays.*

*How the heart is captivated*

*By his radiant beauty!*

*How greatly the soul is elevated*

*By the grandeur of this spectacle!*



**Bolotnikova**

**Упрек мужчинам<sup>5</sup>**

Какое преступление  
Соделал женский пол,  
Что вечно в заключеньи  
Он страждет от оков? —

Природа — мать правдива;  
Ко всем она равна.  
Почто же мысль кичлива  
К вам в голову взошла,

Что будто бы возможно  
Одним вам чудеса творить? —  
Но нам зачто же должно  
Капризы переносить?

Природа сотворила  
Защитниками вас,  
И вам определила,  
Покоить только нас.

Пристрастно же толкуя  
Ея Святой закон,  
Над нами торжествуя  
Вы заглушаете нам стон.

Нет! лучше перестаньте  
Нас бедных обижать.  
Сердечной пожелайте  
К нам дружбою дышать.

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<sup>5</sup> Mariia Bolotnikova: *Derevenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia*. Tipografiia Reshetnikov: Moskva 1817.  
'Uprek mushchinam', pp. 29–30.

Тогда сама природа  
 Лелеить будет вас;  
 Тогда-то милая свобода  
 Утешит в скуке нас. —

***A Reproach to Men***<sup>6</sup>

*What misdemeanour can it be  
 The female sex committed,  
 That means for all eternity  
 We're shackled and imprisoned?*

*As a mother, nature's fair,  
 She treats us equally,  
 How can it be you've come to think  
 Such arrogant thoughts as these?*

*How could it be the case that you  
 Alone work miracles?  
 And why is it we have to bear  
 The brunt of your caprice?*

*What nature had in mind was that  
 You'd turn into defenders,  
 In her design she meant for you  
 To care for us alone.*

*You twist the meaning that you find  
 Writ in her sacred law;  
 You sense your triumph over us  
 And stifle all our cries.*

---

<sup>6</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*It would be better if you stopped  
Offending us poor souls,  
If you could wish to live with us  
In friendship that was true.*

*You'll find that mother nature, then,  
Will want to cherish you;  
You'll also see how gentle freedom  
Calms us in our boredom.*

### **Ответ на послание к женщинам\*<sup>7</sup>**

*\* Г. Сочинитель еще не издал в свет своего творения под заглавием: Послание к женщинам. В сем послании видеть можно лесть в высшей степени. Оно начинается так:*

Женщин милых в свет рожденье  
Есть награда от богов — и проч.

Когда бы все так почитали  
Наградой женщин от небес;  
То меньше б в свете мы страдали  
И каждый свой имел бы вес.

Тогда б напасти удалились  
От сердца нежного на век; —  
Восторги б, радости явились,  
Вкушал бы щастье человек.

Блаженству не было б препоны;  
Достичь бы всяк желал сильней  
Не почестей земных, короны,  
Но что бы милой быть милей.

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<sup>7</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinám', pp. 52–55.

Но ах! не в то живем мы время, —  
Любовь сокрылася в лесах; —  
И мы напастей, бедствий бремя  
Всегда зрим в новых чудесах... —

Так! женщину считают  
Рулеткой на земном шару;  
Сего дни дерзостно ругают,  
А завтра вознесут — в жару —

В жару и Олтари нам строят,  
Название Ангелов дают;  
Клянутся, в страсти пылкой ноят,  
Источник даже слез лиют.

Но лишь подунул ветерочик:  
Погас огонь уж страстный весь,  
Как будто резвой матылиочек,  
В долине скрылся и исчез. —

Потом к другой — с таким же тоном  
Стремится в сети заманить;  
С плачевным, жалким сердца стоном  
Всю жизнь ей хочет посвятить. —

Но коль невинная решится  
Коварным сим словам внимать;  
Пошла страдать, пошла крушиться,  
Конца печалям не видать! —

Не лучше ль у мужчин учиться  
Взаимно тем же тоном петь,  
Чтоб было нечего страшиться?

От леговерия терпеть. —

Не много смертных здесь найдется,

Могущих щастье ощущать. —

В посланьи рыцарь ... признается,

Что можно оное сыскать.

В объятиях супруги милой,

В кругу малюточек своих,

Где можно жить лишь дружбы силой

И исполнять свой долг для них.

Едва ли точно, не притворно

Свое он мнение написал;

Пристрастия вижу я довольно,

Хотя он клятвой подтверждал,

Что женщин точно почитает

Священной связью меж людей,

Их Ангелам предпочитает; —

Страшусь поверить лести сей! —

Вот что-то из стари зовется —

Вот смысл пословицы моей:

Огнем кто больно обожжется,

Тот будет дуть и на людей. —

### ***An Answer to the Epistle to Women***<sup>\*8</sup>

*\*The author has not yet published his work entitled 'Epistle to Women'. In that epistle is found the highest degree of flattery. It starts thus:*

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<sup>8</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*Birth of gentle women on the earth  
Is a gift from the gods. (And so on)*

*If everyone was of the mind  
That women are a gift from God,  
We'd suffer less while on this earth,  
And have our own authority.*

*And misery would then recede,  
Would leave our tender hearts forever; —  
Instead, delight and joy would come,  
And people would taste happiness.*

*There'd be no obstacles to bliss,  
And each would only desire more,  
Not some earthly honour or crown,  
But to be sweeter to your dear one.*

*Alas, that's not the time we live in,  
Now love is hidden in the woods,  
Now misery and misfortune's burden  
Keeps turning up in wonders new.*

*Yes! Now they think of women like  
A roulette wheel upon this earth.  
One day they curse them brazenly,  
Then elevate them, gripped by ardour.*

*In ardour they build altars to us,  
They call us by the name of Angel;  
They swear, they moan in fiery passion,  
Even weep a flood of tears.*

*It only takes a wind to blow:  
 The flame of passion's soon put out,  
 As though a playful moth flew by  
 Hid in a valley, disappeared.*

*On to the next — his tone's the same,  
 He tries to lure her to his net;  
 The sorry, weeping moan of his heart  
 Declares he'll pledge his life to her.*

*And if the innocent girl decides  
 To listen to these cunning words,  
 She's doomed to suffer, doomed to grieve,  
 She'll never see an end to woes.*

*Far better learn our ways from men,  
 And sing their sweet song back to them,  
 So that we'd have no more to fear?  
 No suffering from credulity?*

*There are not many mortals who  
 Are capable of happiness.  
 The knight in his epistle says  
 True happiness is there to find,*

*It's in the arms of your beloved,  
 Encircled by your little ones,  
 Where you live on the strength of friendship,  
 Do your duty for them all.*

*It's not quite right, there's some deceit  
 In this opinion he wrote down;*

*There's quite a bit of bias here,  
Although he vows it is the truth.*

*That he considers women to be  
A sacred linkage between men,  
He favours them above the Angels:  
Such flattery I dread to hear!*

*Now I recall some words of old —  
The meaning of the proverb's this:  
If you're badly burned by fire,  
You'll start to blow on other people.*

#### **Баснь: Собака и ягненок<sup>9</sup>**

Однажды по лугам-то летнею порою,  
Когда в природе все блистает красотою  
Собака, бегавши туда сюда  
От подвигов своих устала.  
От подвигов? — она цветов искала? —  
Нет! нет!  
Хоть ныне странен свет:  
Но ей не свойственно ботанике учиться,  
Как мотылку на дереве садиться.  
Она искала пищу на лугах;  
А пища ведь ея не состоит в цветах;  
Собаки сена не едят;  
Оно растет для лошадей, коров, ягнят.  
Собака, скучивши гуляньем  
И бесполезным по лугам рысканьем,  
На мягкой мураве под кустиком легла  
И больше бегать не могла. —  
Невинный агнец близ тут травочку щипал

---

<sup>9</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Sobaka i iagnenok', pp. 58–60.



И тем свой голод утолял,  
 Как вдруг нечаянно к собаке он подходит.  
 И что же тут находит? —  
 Собака на него со злобой устремлилась,  
 В бока ему вцепилась,  
 Кусала, грызла и хотела умертвить;  
 Но бросив наконец ягненку говорит:  
 “Не смей вперед ко мне ты приближаться  
 И моей пищей наслаждаться.” —  
 Но ей конечно жалко, что другие  
 Находят сладость в пище сей,  
 Вот каковы собаки злые!  
 У других травку отнимают,  
 А сами вкуса в ней не знают. —

***A Fable: The Dog and the Lamb***<sup>10</sup>

*One day, with summer at its height,  
 And nature's beauty dazzling,  
 A dog ran up and down through fields  
 Then wearied of its labours.  
 Labours! Was it seeking flowers?  
 No! Though the world is strange,  
 Still dogs don't take to botany  
 As moths might settle on trees.  
 The dog was in the fields for food,  
 But flowers are not its fare, it can't  
 Eat grass,  
 That grows for horses, cows and lambs.  
 The dog grew bored of running round,  
 Of fruitless foraging in fields,  
 Tired out, it found a sward of grass  
 In shade, lay down and ran no further.*

---

<sup>10</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*A guileless lamb was nibbling grass  
 To satisfy its hunger, when  
 It came upon the dog by chance,  
 And what should come to pass?  
 The dog set on the lamb in anger,  
 Clawing at its sides,  
 Biting, gnawing, set to kill,  
 But then let go and cursed:  
 Don't dare come near another time,  
 Take pleasure in my food.  
 Of course, it rued the fact that some  
 Found sweetness in the grass.  
 And that's how nasty dogs can be.  
 They take from others grass and hay  
 When they don't like it anyway.*

### **Разсуждение моего Дворецкого<sup>11</sup>**

Скоро свечка так сгарает?  
 Ванька, слышу я, спросил;  
 Видно барыня читает  
 Всё Глафиру и Камин.

Нет! отпала бы охота,  
 Ночку с книгой провождать;  
 Коль узналаб, сколь работа  
 Тяжела нам — жать, пахать.

Коль досталось бы денёчек  
 Ей хотя помолотить,  
 Иль гресть сено на лужочик,  
 Или с поля хлеб возить: —

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<sup>11</sup> Bolotnikova, 'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoetskago', pp. 18–22.

Тогдаб рада лишь до места  
К уголочку где прильнуть  
И, покушав кисол, пресно,  
Поскорее бы заснуть.

Господам какое горе?  
Лишь проснулись — за чай,  
А там завтрак так же вскоре:  
Реж, спеши, готовляй.

Бедный повар суетится  
Каждый час подле огня —  
Блюд до дюжины варится,  
Нет ему спокойна дня.

Что за роскошь? — за обедом  
Пьют заморское вино;  
А крестьянин с черным хлебом  
Есть садится толокно.

Правду молвить — мы и сыты,  
Кашу, щи едим всегда;  
Но боимся, что бы биты  
Были старостой когда.

Он у нас мужик свирепой;  
Не даст летом нам гулять;  
На заре уже одетой  
Спешит всех к работе гнать.

Мыж ребята непривычны —  
Нам ли за сохой ходить?  
Господаж хотят отличны

В нас таланты находить.

Ведь одним чем заниматься —  
Будем в комнатах служить,  
А то девки разрезвятся  
И начнут уж рюмки бить.

И буфет весь опустеет  
Без дворецкого тогда;  
Девка на пол ромом сеет,  
Вряд взойдет ли он когда!

А во всем мы виноваты —  
И что свечки все горят!  
Видно были не прибраны,  
Господа о том твердят.

Да расходу им ведь много —  
Я, позвольте, доложу;  
Парикмахер кричит строго:  
«Я ведь барыне скажу,

«Что без сала не возможно  
«Ныне голову убрать —  
«Им, пригладив осторожно,  
«Можно пуклю завязать. —»

Ах! такой охоты к чтенью  
Нигде верно не сыскать!  
Наша барыня в ученьи  
Любит время провождать.

День и ночь всегда читает

Про Парфiona и авось;  
 Но хозяйских дел не знает,  
 По ней все в огонь хоть брось.

Говорят, что не читали  
 В старину-то Господа;  
 А их хлеб, соль все знавали,  
 Но не та теперь пора.

Все в Поэзию пустились;  
 Звезды все хотят считать;  
 Мнят, что очень просветились,  
 А хозяйство? — не им знать!

***My Butler's Thoughts***<sup>12</sup>

*Will the candle burn down soon,  
 I heard how Vanka asked,  
 Her ladyship must still be reading  
 Glafira and Kamin.*

*But she would soon think better of  
 Her late nights spent with books  
 If she'd some notion of how hard  
 It is to reap and plough.*

*If she had just one day in which  
 She even had to mill,  
 Or in the meadow thresh the corn,  
 Or fetch the wheat from fields:—*

*Happy just to get back home  
 And settle in her corner;*

---

<sup>12</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*Once she'd eaten bland kissel,  
She'd soon drop off to sleep.*

*What problems do the masters know?  
They send for tea on waking,  
Then order breakfast not long after,  
Slice quickly, get it done.*

*The poor old cook's rushed off his feet,  
Forever at the stove,  
Cooking for a dozen diners,  
Never a quiet day.*

*And what about the luxury,  
Foreign wine at lunch,  
Meanwhile the peasant sits to eat  
His oatmeal and black bread.*

*To tell the truth, we don't go hungry,  
Always kasha, soup,  
But what we fear is one day we'll  
Be beaten by our master.*

*He's such a beast he never gives us  
Time off in the summer,  
At dawn he's dressed, and in a rush  
He chivvies us to work.*

*Now we are such unusual men,  
Should we be at the plough?  
And yet the masters want to see  
Our talents shining through.*

*We have but one main job to do,  
We must serve in the house,  
If not the servant girls let loose  
Will start to smash the glass.*

*The cupboards won't be full for long  
Without the butler there,  
The girls will sow the floor with rum,  
I don't think that will grow.*

*But we're the cause of all the problems —  
The candles should be snuffed,  
And no one's tidied them away,  
The masters tell us that.*

*Yes, your expenses do pile up,  
And I can tell you why,  
The hairdresser shouts angrily  
The mistress needs to know*

*You see, your hair cannot be styled  
Without some pork fat on it,  
Smooth it over carefully  
To tie it in a bun.*

*You know, such love for reading books  
You'll never find elsewhere,  
Our mistress loves to spend her time  
Just studying away.*

*By day and night she's always reading,  
The Parthenon and so on,  
But as to how to run her farm,*

*Why not just burn it down?*

*They say that in the olden days*

*The masters never read,*

*We knew they'd share their bread and salt,*

*But now those days are passed.*

*It's all been lost to poetry,*

*They're all off counting stars,*

*It seems as though they're now much wiser,*

*But run the farm? No chance.*



Наумова

К Делии<sup>13</sup>

Счастлив укрывшийся от злобы и сует  
Под кровлей сельскою, в тиши уединенья  
Кто дни в полях своих с безпечною ведет  
И в дружбе милых Муз находит наслажденья!

Ах! он почувствует, как житель городской,  
Последствий горестных от жизни развлеченной,  
В полях и хижинке его всегда покой,  
Невинных, чистых душ товарищ неизменной.

И шум убийственных, мечтательных утех  
Сравниться может ли с веселостью сердечной?  
И там ли счастье, где со слезами смех,  
Где связан человек, где он — невольник вечной?

О Делия, мой друг! завидую тебе!  
Ты в хижинке своей, не зная принуждений,  
Ни тягостных забот, поешь хвалу судьбе;  
А я, несчастливый, я, жертва обольщений,

Встаю с заботами, с заботами ложусь,  
И утомившись, в мечтаньях засыпаю.  
Но сон мой сладок ли? Нет; я во сне крушусь,  
Игрушкой случая, рабом страстей бываю.

И нет мне радостей, меня бежит покой;  
Увял цвет юности, и — в тридцать лет морщины!  
Меж тем в полях своих, невинная душой,  
Ты, Делия, цветешь, не зная злой кручины.

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<sup>13</sup> Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaia tipografiia: Moscow 1819. 'K Delii', pp. 127–129.

И дай Бог, чтоб ее не знала никогда,  
 В тени дубрав своих от света укрывалась,  
 Как тихой ручеек чтоб жизнь твоя текла,  
 И бурями страстей отнюдь не возмущалась.

И дай Бог Делии ввек горя избегать!  
 Чтоб хижинка для ней все счастье заключала,  
 Чтоб сердцем отдохнув, она могла сказать:  
 «Вот здесь-то наконец спокойствие узнала!»

### ***To Delia***<sup>14</sup>

*Happy is he that hides from hate and bustle,  
 Who lives in peaceful, rural solitude,  
 Whose carefree days are spent in open fields,  
 Whose pleasure comes from friendship with the Muse.*

*He understands, like people from the city,  
 How life filled with distractions is a sorrow,  
 His cottage in the fields is filled with peace,  
 The faithful friend of innocent, pure souls.*

*Can the noise of deadly, dreamy joys  
 Compare with true delights felt by the heart?  
 Can happiness be true when mixed with tears?  
 Or when a person's bound, in thrall forever?*

*O Delia, my friend, I envy you,  
 You never feel such pressure, in seclusion,  
 No cross to bear, you sing the praise of fate,  
 Whilst I, unhappy, suffer from delusion,*

---

<sup>14</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*I rise with troubles, with them go to bed,  
And weary, fall asleep with idle thoughts,  
Are my dreams sweet? No, keening in my sleep,  
I am a toy of fate, a slave of passion.*

*I have no joy, and peace eludes me still,  
My youth is fading fast, wrinkles at thirty!  
While in your fields, your soul is innocent,  
You blossom, never knowing evil sorrow.*

*And God forbid you ever come to know it,  
Be shielded from the world by shady oaks,  
May life flow like a peaceful stream for you,  
And stay untroubled by the storms of passion.*

*Yes, God keep Delia innocent of sorrow,  
Her cottage should be full of happiness,  
And when her heart's at rest, may she profess,  
'Right here, at last, I recognize this peace!'*

#### **Счастлива Делия, Поэт уединенный...**<sup>15</sup>

Счастлива Делия, Поэт уединенный  
Так мило, мило так которую воспел;  
Конечно, Ангелом быв свыше вдохновенный,  
Блаженство мирных дней так выразить умел!  
Невинных, чистых душ Эдемско наслажденье  
Как живо в Делии своей представил он,  
И в сельской тишине какое услажденье  
В беседе милых Муз им дал ей Аполлон!

Как градску суетность спокойствием заменяет,  
В тени дубрав ея сколь ей утех дает!

---

<sup>15</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Schastliva Delia, Poet uedinennyi...', pp. 130–135.

Любезной простотой как Делию пленяет!  
Какия на нее дары небесны льет!  
Но гдеж та Делия, котору воспеваает  
С таким восторгом чувств пустынный наш Певец,  
В уединении которой он свивает  
Из мирт, из лилий прелестной свой венец?

Где, где та Делия, в которой он представил  
Небесных жителей чудесных идеал,  
Котору песню своею так прославил,  
Которой чувства он превыше смертных дал?  
Ах! где та Делия, котора так счастлива,  
Как чистой ручеек дни коей протекут,  
Судьба с которой так живет миролюбиво,  
От коей Гении коварных отвлекут?

Где, где та Делия, котора заключает  
В укромной хижинке все счастье свое,  
Которую уже ничто не огорчает, —  
Где можно отыскать обитель мне ея?  
Пошлаб охотно к ней в подруги неизменные,  
И Музу робкую своюб к ней привела;  
Ей вверила бы я все чувства сокровенны,  
Без страха бы уже с ней дружество свела!

И с милой Делией вечернею порою  
Беседовалаб я спокойно в тишине.  
Друг друга тешилиб мы лирною игрою;  
Вилаб венок я ей, онаб свивала мне;  
Или б в дубраву мы пошли рука с рукою;  
Или близь ручейка мыб сели отдохнуть,  
И там, чуть тронуты сердечною тоскою,  
Спешилиб милых нам друзей вспомануть.

Тут торопились бы в свое уединенье  
 И рукодельем бы прилежно занялась;  
 Коль чуть соскучились, тотчас за песнопенье  
 Охотноб, веселоб мы с нею принялись,  
 Взаимно строивши нам драгоценны лиры,  
 Воспелиб счастье своих беспечных дней;  
 Под именем Клоинки, Прелесты, иль Темиры,  
 Воспелаб милую я юности моей.

В обитель мирную свою бы принимали  
 С гостеприимностью мы странников всегда,  
 Простосердечно бы рассказам их внимали,  
 Но с осторожностью их слушалиб тогда:  
 Вить опыт научил страшиться днес коварных  
 И от клеветников укромной дом хранить,  
 Беречься завсегда людей неблагодарных  
 И слишком дорого ужь свой покой ценить.

Завистникиб могли свои тож планы строить  
 И в мирну хижинку раздоры заключить  
 И снова дружество и счастье разстроить  
 И с Делией меня, как с С..., разлучить.  
 Кто может отгадать все мысли лицемерных,  
 Все происки людей зломышленных узнать?  
 В приятельских лицах найдем друзей неверных;  
 Простосердечнымиль льстецов тотчас признать?

Однако, как же жить, когда всего страшиться?  
 Хранитель-Ангел наш пусть нас остережет.  
 Ужель сообщества подобных нам лишиться?  
 Всевышний, благий Бог от злых нас сбережет.  
 Пускай с простыми мы, с открытыми душами

На встречу странников без ропота пойдём.  
И не с коварными, но с добрыми сердцами,  
В укромной домик свой невинных приведем.

Вот так бы с Делией я в хижине смиренной  
Жила бы по просту, спокойно, без затей.  
Дорогу укажи, Певец уединенной!  
И робкой Музе ты к любимице твоей!  
Да полно правда ли? найдется ли в сем мире  
Блаженство райское, воспетое тобой?  
Нет; верно, верно ты, когда играл на лире,  
По чести занят был фантазией, мечтой.

Иль, может, что ты был наружностью обманут,  
Иль, по слуху судил о Делии своей;  
Но истину одну вещать когда же станут?  
Иль в тридцать лет еще не знаешь ты людей?  
Наружность иногда обманчива бывает.  
Поверь мне: часто тот, кто весело поет,  
Под час в душе своей томится, унывает,  
Поверь мне, иногда и слезы то же льет.

Поверь, здесь не найдешь ты благ всех совершенство;  
Где смех, где вздохи, там веселие с тоской;  
И то здесь почитай за райское блаженство,  
Коль мало мальски где найдется хоть покой.  
Престань завидовать ты Делии любезной;  
Не так, как хочется, как Бог велел, живи.  
Нет с Делией путей — то поиск бесполезной;  
Со мною ты ее мечтою назови.

***Happy is Delia, She Was Sung so Sweetly***<sup>16</sup>

*Happy is Delia, she was sung so sweetly,  
 So sweetly by a solitary Poet,  
 With angels from above inspiring him,  
 He could evoke the bliss of peaceful days!  
 So vividly he showed in Delia  
 Edenic joy in pure and innocent souls,  
 And in her quiet village gave such sweetness  
 That comes from talk with Muses, from Apollo.*

*And as the city's bustle turns to calm  
 Beneath the shady oaks, she feels such pleasure,  
 Enchanted by such strange simplicity,  
 What heavenly gifts are poured upon her brow!  
 Yet where now is that Delia who was sung  
 With rapture by our solitary poet,  
 Whose solitude he used to weave a wreath,  
 A wondrous crown adorned with myrtle, lilies.*

*O where is Delia, in whom he saw  
 The image of some wondrous heaven dwellers,  
 The Delia his song so glorified,  
 Endowed with higher sensibilities.  
 And where now is that Delia, so glad,  
 For whom the days flow past a crystal stream,  
 With whom Fate lives in perfect harmony,  
 Whose genius rebuffs all things corrupt.*

*Where, O where is Delia who contains  
 Her happiness in just one humble cottage,  
 There's nothing in the world to raise her ire,  
 Where can I find her modest, small abode?*

---

<sup>16</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*I'd gladly be a stoic friend to her,  
 I'd take my timid muse along to see her,  
 Entrust her with my innermost desires,  
 And have no fear embarking on our friendship.*

*And come the evening, with sweet Delia,  
 The world at peace, we'd quietly chat away,  
 We'd calm each other playing on the lyre,  
 I'd weave her wreath, she'd fashion one for me,  
 Or hand in hand we'd wander to the grove,  
 Or near the stream we'd sit and take a rest,  
 And at a tinge of sorrow in our hearts,  
 We'd quickly bring to mind our dearest friends.*

*And then we'd hurry back to solitude,  
 Take up again our craft assiduously,  
 And any time if bored, we'd start to sing,  
 Strike up a song with energy and zeal.  
 We'd help each other tune our dearest lyres,  
 We'd sing about our happy, carefree days,  
 For Kloinka, for Prelest or Temira  
 I'd sing in praise a sweet song of my youth.*

*And at our peaceful dwelling we'd be sure  
 To give all travellers hospitality,  
 With simple hearts we'd listen to their tales,  
 But not be taken in incautiously.  
 We've learnt to treat with fear the treacherous today,  
 To keep our sheltered cottage free from liars,  
 Protect ourselves from those who have no thanks,  
 And hold in high regard the peace we treasure.*

*The envious could also lay their plans,*



*To stir up tension in our peaceful home,  
 To undo all our friendship, happiness,  
 Part me from Delia, as once I was from S....  
 But who can fathom the thoughts of hypocrites,  
 The intrigues of malicious minds at work?  
 In friendly faces one can find false friends;  
 See flatterers at first as simple-hearted.*

*But can we live in fear of everything?  
 Let our Guardian Angel keep us safe.  
 Why should we forego this kind of company?  
 The Great God will protect us from the evil,  
 Let us go with simple, open souls,  
 To meet with travellers, without a murmur,  
 Not calculating, but with kindly hearts,  
 We'll lead the innocent to our sheltered house.*

*That's how I'd live with Delia in our cottage,  
 A simple, unpretentious life in peace.  
 Show this timid muse the way, o Solitary Poet!  
 Take me down the path that leads to your beloved.  
 But is it really true that we can find  
 On Earth the heavenly bliss that's in your songs?  
 No, truly, truly, when you played the lyre,  
 A fantasy then gripped you, just a dream.*

*Perhaps you were deceived by how things looked,  
 What you believed of Delia was a rumour,  
 But when will people ever tell the truth?  
 At thirty, can it be you're still naive?  
 Appearances can sometimes be deceptive.  
 Believe me: often it's the joyful singer  
 Who in his soul is weary and depressed,*

*Believe me, he at times may even shed his tears.*

*Believe me you won't find complete perfection,  
For laughter comes with sighs and joy with sorrow,  
You should consider it as heavenly bliss  
If you have just the smallest bit of peace.  
Stop envying your dearest Delia,  
Don't live the way you wish but as God ordered;  
There is no path with Delia — your search  
Is vain, along with me call her a dream.*

### **К Эльвире<sup>17</sup>**

Эльвира! посмотри на пару голубков,  
Которые вокруг тебя теперь летают!  
Прелестны голубки, поверь Эльвира, знают,  
Что наше счастье — невинная любовь.  
Смотри, как голубок с голубкою играет!  
Как нежит он ее, как пламенно лобзает!  
Смотри! Они взвились, и — страстный голубок  
От милой ни на шаг: какой любви урок!  
И как им не пленяться?  
Эльвира милая! подобно голубкам  
Должноб любить и нам!  
Но людям ли, скажи, сим счастьем наслаждаться?  
Ссылаюсь в том, Эльвира, на тебя:  
Ты помнишь, как клялась вовек любить меня  
И мною только жить и мною утешаться;  
Но, ах! где правда слов?  
Где клятва, где любовь?  
Ты о другом теперь, Эльвира, воздыхаешь,  
И клятву — век любить — другому повторяешь.

---

<sup>17</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K El'vire', pp. 136–137.

**To Elvira**<sup>18</sup>

*Elvira, see that pair of doves*  
*That's flying round about you now,*  
*These wondrous doves, believe me, know*  
*That happiness is innocent love.*  
*The male dove's playing with his mate!*  
*Such tenderness, such ardent kisses!*  
*See them entwined — the passionate male*  
*Won't leave his dear — they teach us love!*  
*He's so bewitched!*  
*Elvira, dear! Just like the doves*  
*So we should love!*  
*Can people ever know such joy?*  
*Elvira, you just prove my point:*  
*Recall your oath to love forever,*  
*To live for, cherish me alone;*  
*Ah, where's the truth?*  
*The vow, the love?*  
*When now you're sighing for another,*  
*And pledging love to him instead.*

**Ответ**<sup>19</sup>

Певец уединенной! лиру  
 На днях настроивши свою,  
 Воспел какую-то Эльвиру,  
 И душу тронул ты мою!  
 Глазам Эльвиры сей представил  
 Ты пару верных голубков,  
 Меня же вспомить сим заставил  
 Сердечных, милых мне дружков.

---

<sup>18</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

<sup>19</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Otvét', pp. 138–142.

Твои голубчики прекрасны  
Не знают гибельный порок;  
Быв постоянны, нежны, страстны,  
В святой любви дают урок.  
Всегда верны, и не пленяют  
И не влюбляются в других;  
Друг другу ввек не изменяют  
И клятвы чтут сердец своих.

А люди чуть не обожают  
Уже символ любви святой;  
Но, ах! ему не подражают,  
И часто верность чтут мечтой.  
Давноль и я изображала  
Любовь двух верных голубков,  
Под видом их воображала  
Моих возлюбленных дружков;

А ныне птички сизокрылы  
Коль попадают где мне,  
Напомнят призраки унылы,  
И я горю как на огне;  
А сердце вдруг вооружится  
На призрак сумрачной такой,  
За верность милых побожится,  
И в душу возвратит покой.

Певец! Эльвивру упрекаешь  
К себе в неверности ее,  
А стрелы метко ты пускаешь  
И в сердце бедное мое.  
Да что, Певец уединенной!  
Сам может быть ты ослеплен:

Злой ревностью воспламененной,  
Иною стал и сам пленен.

Эльвиру не вини безбожно;  
Внутрь сердца своего взгляни!  
Быть может, оскорблен ей ложно;  
Проступок свой с ея сравни.  
Ну, есть ли сам ты лицемерен,  
Оледенел коль сердцем к ней,  
Непостоянный! коль неверен  
Уже возлюбленной своей,

За чтож тебе винить Эльвиру?  
Несправедливости стыдись!  
Ах! вновь свою настроя лиру,  
Перед безвинной извиннись!  
Знай, Муза робкая возстанет  
И ложь твою изобличит,  
На лире правду смело грянет,  
Безстрашно арфой зазвучит.

Не с тем Поэзии искусством  
Меня Всевышний наделил,  
Чтоб гений мой с презренным чувством  
Несправедливым людям льстил;  
Доколе жить в сем мире стану,  
Верь, правду я не оболгу,  
Карать хоть злых не перестану,  
Коварных стрелы избегу.

Меня за правду не оставит  
Всевышний милостью Своей,  
Передо мной свой щит поставит

И защитит от злых людей,  
И может быть моей Он лирой  
Исправит несколько сердец;  
А тыж с безвинною Эльвирой  
Тож примиришь, драгой Певец!

А ежели она неверна,  
Так нечего жалеть о ней;  
Коль в чувствах сердца лицемерна,  
То верь, блаженства нет и ей.  
И тот, кого она пленила,  
Разлюбит также и ее,  
За то, что другу изменила,  
Не взглянет скоро на нее.

Тогда виновная Эльвира  
Начнет терзаться злой тоской;  
Тебяж утешит скромна лира  
И в сердце поселит покой:  
Тогда, Певец уединенной!  
Ты о несчастной пожалей,  
Ея раскаяньем смягченный,  
Прости чистосердечно ей.

Прости — что делать? Кто в сем мире  
Хоть раз не падал никогда?  
В исправленной бедой Эльвире  
Надежен будешь завсегда.  
С почтеньем дружба соединяся,  
Устроят счастье ваше вновь,  
И вами добрые пленяся,  
Прославят нежную любовь.

**Reply**<sup>20</sup>

*O solitary poet, your lyre,  
 Whose strings you tuned just days ago,  
 Sang of a lady called Elvira,  
 And now your song has stirred my soul!  
 You set before Elvira's gaze  
 A pair of faithful, loving doves,  
 Your image forced me to recall  
 Warm-hearted and dear friends I've known.*

*These wondrous little doves of yours  
 Don't suffer from some fatal flaw.  
 They're constant, tender, passionate,  
 And show the way of sacred love,  
 They're always true, do not set traps,  
 They never fall in love with others;  
 They'll not deceive each other ever,  
 But keep the vows made by their hearts.*

*They're almost worshipped now, seen as  
 A symbol of some sacred love,  
 That can't, alas, be reproduced,  
 We only dream of staying true!  
 Once, long ago, I too portrayed  
 The love between two faithful doves,  
 I used it as an image of  
 A couple of beloved friends.*

*But now these pale-grey-winged birds,  
 If they should chance to cross my path,  
 Bring melancholy ghosts to mind,  
 They make me burn as though on fire.*

---

<sup>20</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*My heart then takes up arms against  
 All gloomy spectres such as this,  
 It swears the faithfulness of lovers,  
 And peace returns then to my soul.*

*Dear Poet, you reproach Elvira  
 For her unfaithfulness to you,  
 But doing so you fire your arrows  
 Straight into my poor heart too.  
 What of it, solitary Poet?  
 It could be you yourself are blind:  
 Enraged by evil jealousy  
 You're not yourself, but are ensnared.*

*So don't accuse Elvira rashly,  
 Take a look inside your heart!  
 Perhaps you're wrong to feel so hurt,  
 Compare the wrong you've done to her.  
 If you are hypocritical,  
 And now your heart has hardened, then  
 You've broken faith! Already you  
 Are not being true to her you loved,*

*So how can you accuse Elvira?  
 Shame on you for being unjust!  
 Ah! Tune your lyre now once again,  
 Say sorry to the innocent one!  
 Know that the timid muse will rise  
 To put the record straight once more.  
 The lyre will boldly sing the truth  
 The harp will strike up without fear.*

*This is not why Almighty God*



*Gave me the gift of poetry,  
So that with scorn my genius  
Could flatter those who are unjust;  
However long my earthly life  
Believe me, I'll not slander truth,  
Nor stop chastising evil-doers,  
Nor dodging arrows from the sly.*

*And by his mercy, God Himself,  
Won't punish me for speaking truth,  
In front of me he'll place his shield,  
Protecting me from evil-doers,  
Perhaps he'll use my lyre to help  
Put right a score of broken hearts,  
And you, as well, dear Poet, should  
Make peace with innocent Elvira!*

*And if she is unfaithful, then,  
There's no sense harking after her,  
If she's a hypocrite at heart,  
Believe me, there's no bliss for her.  
Whoever she's ensnared, be sure,  
Will soon fall out of love with her,  
The fact that she's betrayed a friend  
Will turn him from her very soon.*

*And if Elvira's guilty, then,  
She'll soon be torn with misery,  
While you'll take solace from the lyre,  
And peace will settle in your heart.  
And then, my solitary Poet!  
You'll pity this unhappy girl,  
When her repentance softens you,*

*Your heart will find forgiveness too.*

*I'm sorry, what's to do? For who  
Can say he's never fallen once?  
With lessons learnt from her disgrace,  
She will be true forever more,  
Joining friendship with respect,  
You'll build your happiness again,  
Good people, gripped by this your tale  
Will sing in praise of tender love.*

**От пустынного-Поэта, очаровательной Музе Святого ключа<sup>21</sup>**

О Сафо Русская! Поэт уединенный,  
Тобою взысканный, тобою вдохновенный,  
С восторгом получил приятной твой ответ,  
И снова для него стал мил, прелестен свет,  
И сердце к красотам природы растворилось,  
И жизнь его опять надеждой оживилась.  
Волшебница! скажи, где дар ты заняла  
Производить такое превращенье?  
Лишь я прочел твоё стихотворенье,  
Которым в грудь мою отраду ты влила,  
Как вдруг почувствовал приятное волненье —  
И Верой укрепясь, несчастья забыл.  
Ах! сколь я пред Творцем неблагодарен был,  
Что в горести моей роптал на Провиденье!  
О Муза милая! сказав: — тебеля грустить?  
Не знал причины я, от коей ты страдаешь!  
Коварства, хитрости людей переносить,  
Особенно же тех, с кем сердце разделяешь,  
Жестоко, знаю сам; но лучше их забыть,  
Бог с ними, и пускай Он будет их судьбою:

---

<sup>21</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Ot pustynnika-Poeta, ocharovatel' noi Muze Sviatago kliucha', pp. 113–114.

Они, гонимые разгневанной судьбою,  
 Почувствуют вину перед тобой.  
 А ты, как будто бы совсем не замечаешь  
 И гнусную измену презираешь,  
 Блаженство дней невинных пой!

***From the Hermit Poet to the Charming Muse of the Holy Spring***<sup>22</sup>

*Sappho of Russia! The solitary Poet,  
 Who is both favoured and inspired by you,  
 Was jubilant receiving your kind answer,  
 And sees the world as great and sweet once more.  
 Now nature with her beauty melts his heart,  
 And life has come alive again with hope.  
 Enchantress! Tell me where you got this gift  
 That can produce such a metamorphosis?  
 It was as soon as I had read your poem  
 With which you poured such joy into my breast,  
 That suddenly I felt a pleasant tremor—  
 And strengthened by belief, forgot my grief.  
 Alas how I was thankless before God,  
 When in my sorrow I complained of Fate,  
 O Muse, when I asked: why are you sad?  
 I didn't know the reason why you suffer!  
 To bear some people's malice and their hate,  
 Especially those your heart has opened up to,  
 Is cruel, I know that now, but just forget!  
 Let them be and leave their fate to God.  
 When they are being pursued by angered fate,  
 They'll come to see the wrong that they have done,  
 And you, pretending you don't notice them,  
 Will hold their vile betrayal in contempt,  
 Instead you'll praise the bliss of innocent days!*

---

<sup>22</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

### К пустынно-Поэту<sup>23</sup>

Имя Сафы я не стою;  
 Мне ли Русской Сафой слыть?  
 Мне ли арфою святою  
 Так как ей известной быть?  
 От пустынно-Поэта  
 Вновь посланье получив,  
 Муза робкая Агнета  
 Взоры в землю потупив,

Улыбнулась и сказала:  
 Мнелъ, как сей Гречанке, петь?  
 Но на сердце указала,  
 Здесь умею грусть терпеть.  
 На утес крутой Левкада,  
 Хоть и горько—не взойду,  
 И от пасмурного взгляда  
 Вниз с него не упаду.

Не хочу в ключе забвенья  
 Вод целительных я пить;  
 Все на свете сновиденье:  
 Лучше по просту любить.  
 Да любить хоть сердцу больно,  
 Без любви отрады нет.  
 Но, Поэт мой! я невольно  
 Позабыла свой ответ.

Робку Музу вопрошаешь,  
 Где она взяла дар свой?  
 Слишком уж провозглашаешь

---

<sup>23</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K pustynniku-poetu', pp. 115–119.

Ты его, Певец драгой!  
Не в насмешку ли искусство  
Превозносишь ты мое?  
Ах! простое сердца чувство  
Отвечает на сие.

Хоть не Сафою родилась,  
Ни волшебницей живу,  
Но к Парнаксу пристрастилась,  
И на нем я мирты рву.  
Чувство сердца мою лиру  
Строило с юнейших лет;  
Муза, жизнь влачивши сиру,  
По неволе запоет.

О Поэт уединенный!  
Есть ли в хижинке твоей,  
Своей Музой вдохновенный,  
Ты утешен и моей,  
За труды свои стократно  
Ужь она награждена;  
Ей и лестно и приятно,  
Что близь Волги не одна,

Не одна она игрою  
Занимается своей,  
Но что Бард иной порою  
Подает идеи ей,  
Подает и наставленья  
В утешительных словах.  
Верь, твое мне песнопенье  
Есть отрада в сих местах.

С ним коварных забывая,  
Злой судьбы им не хочу,  
С ним я реже унывая,  
Чаще лирою брянчу.  
Продолжай, Певец любезный!  
Продолжай чудотворить  
И гармонией полезной  
Не ленись животворить.

Робку Музу усыпленну  
И Певицу пробуди,  
Мыслей, чувств, идей лишенну,  
Прежний жар в ней возбуди!  
Пой, Певец уединенный!  
Пой Симбирской Скальд больной!  
Гением быв вдохновенный,  
Оживешь и ты с весной.

С разцветающей весной  
Также оживу и я,  
Вся небесная со мною  
Мною чтимая семья:  
Вразумит меня София,  
И поддержит Вера вновь,  
И Надежда пожалея,  
Подведет ко мне Любовь,

Но не ту, которой ложно  
Люди счастливы слывут,  
И в которой так безбожно  
Часто мрамором живут,  
Но то чувство долговечно,  
Душу что влечет любить,

С ближним искренно, сердечно  
Смех и горе разделить.

Пусть иные оскорбляют,  
Пусть другие .... сокрушат;  
Естьлиж те благословляют,  
Грусть сердечну уменьшат.  
Так, сирот моих и Лиду  
Я с восторгом воспою;  
Горьких слез — забыв обиду  
Ближних сердцу — не пролью.

***To the Hermit Poet***<sup>24</sup>

*I don't deserve the name of Sappho;  
Could 'Russian Sappho' be my name?  
Could I, armed with the sacred harp  
Achieve the level of her fame?  
When now the Hermit Poet sent  
A missive once again to me,  
Agneta, my most timorous Muse,  
With eyes cast down towards the ground,*

*Said, as she broke into a smile,  
Should I be singing, like the Greek?  
But as she gestured to her heart,  
Said, 'Here can I put up with grief,  
Though things are tough I will not climb  
The heights of the Levkada cliffs,  
And at a dark, foreboding glance,  
I will not throw myself below.'*

*I do not wish to quench my thirst*

---

<sup>24</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*With waters of oblivion,  
 For everything on Earth's a dream,  
 And simple love is best by far.  
 And even if it hurts the heart,  
 Without it there can be no love.  
 But, dear Poet, by mistake,  
 I've strayed from my reply to you.*

*You question my poor timid Muse,  
 Where she received her talent from,  
 By doing so, dear singer, you  
 Give praise much higher than deserved!  
 And when you elevate my art  
 Perhaps you're really mocking me?  
 Ah, simple feelings of the heart  
 Will give the answers that I need:*

*I was not born to be a Sappho,  
 And do not live as an enchantress,  
 Yet I've a passion for Parnassus,  
 And there I gather myrtle now.  
 The feeling of the heart has tuned  
 My lyre from my earliest days;  
 The Muse, whose wretched days drag on,  
 Can't help herself, but starts to sing.*

*My solitary Poet! When  
 You're seated in your humble home,  
 And when your Muse inspires you,  
 If you take comfort then from mine,  
 Then for her efforts she's been paid  
 One hundred times the effort made.  
 She's pleased and flattered not to be*



*Alone beside the Volga here.*

*Not to be the only one  
Who's taken up with playing her sound,  
And that, another time, the Bard  
Will offer some ideas to her,  
Will offer her his teaching too  
In how to write consoling words.  
Believe me when I say your song  
Brings joy to me when I am here.*

*Your song makes me forget the bad,  
Although I don't wish them ill fate,  
And with it I am less despondent,  
Happier to strum my lyre.  
So carry on, dear singer, please!  
Keep working miracles like these,  
And with this healthy harmony,  
Don't slack in being lively.*

*But wake the sleeping, timid Muse,  
And the sleeping lady, who's  
Deprived of thoughts, ideas, feelings,  
Re-light the fire that burned inside!  
Sing, O solitary singer,  
Sing of the sickly Siberian skald!  
And by this Genius inspired  
You will awaken with the spring.*

*And as the spring comes into bloom,  
I too will come to life once more,  
And with me all the heavenly  
Family that I so esteem:*

*I'll take conviction from Sophia,  
Truth will support me once again,  
And taking pity on me, Hope  
Will show the way and lead to Love.*

*But not the kind of love that's false,  
A semblance of real happiness,  
That leads the lovers, godlessly,  
To lives lived coldly, carved in stone,  
I mean a feeling that's eternal,  
That draws the very soul to love,  
To share with people close to us,  
Sincerely, happiness and grief.*

*Let other people cause offence,  
Let other people... bring about ruin,  
If you can give your blessing to them,  
The sorrow in your heart will cease.  
And so with jubilation, I sing  
A song of Lida and my orphans,  
The hurt from those I love has gone,  
And bitter tears I will not shed.*

### **Урок молодым девушкам<sup>25</sup>**

Любезны девушки! страшитесь  
Всегдашних вы врагов своих,  
Мущин коварных берегитесь,  
Не слушайте ласкательств их;  
Не редко так, как змей лукавый,  
Пленивший Евву, нашу мать,  
Они польстят вам счастьем, славой,  
А там — ужь поздно горевать.

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<sup>25</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37.

Большою частью лицемеры,  
Они смеются только вам;  
Не очень к ним имейте веры,  
Не доверяйте их словам,  
Не доверяйте страстным взглядам,  
Ни самым тяжким вздохам их,  
Сердец не отравляйте ядом  
Вы медом пчел фальшивых сих.

Любви исполнены их взоры  
Небесной вам Эдем сулят,  
И сладостны их разговоры  
Вас благоденством веселят;  
Но их сердца для вас закрыты,  
Их мысли неизвестны вам:  
Искусно хитростью прикрыты,  
Инакой смысл дают речам.

Совет, который вам нелестно,  
Любя вас, матери дадут,  
Пренебрегать для вас безчестно;  
Оне от бед вас стерегут,  
Оне хранят вас от обманов,  
Пронырств лукавых сих врагов:  
В рабах — найдете вы тиранов,  
В свободе — тяжесть злых оков.

Красотки-девушки! имейте  
Вы осторожность всякой час,  
И собственных сердец робейте;  
Они проводят также вас.  
Не редко там, где мните сладость,

Найдете горечь лютых дней;  
Навек свою сгубивши младость,  
Умрете вы душой своей. —

Супружеством не торопитесь,  
Не льстите кинуть отчий дом,  
Мечтою лживой не слепитесь,  
Не славьтесь умственным добром;  
Не сделайте неблагодарны  
Против родителей своих:  
Подумайте — льстецы коварны; —  
Ах! не сменяйте тех на сих.

Взгляните сами на Милену,  
Которую пленил Милон;  
Какую же в ней перемену  
В два только года сделал он!  
Она, как роза разцветала  
Под сению родных своих,  
Как будто бабочка летала,  
Резвясь, лобзала нежно их.

Толико бывши благонравна,  
Колико же была умна!  
Всегда равно веселонравна,  
Как Май смеялася она;  
На балах, в обществах и дома  
Милена тешилась всегда;  
Ни грусть, ни скука незнакома  
С ней не были еще тогда.

Но на ея беду возмися,  
Бог ведает отколь, Милон,

Глазам неопытной явился  
Как будто некий Гений он;  
Или, как будто бы бог брани,  
Среди триумфа, торжества  
Приемлющий всемирны дани  
Во всем сияньи божества;

Или, как воин знаменитый  
По дивным подвигам своим,  
Его шлем лаврами покрытый  
Вещал довольно всем о нем.  
Милон был юноша прекрасной,  
Казался нежным, добрым он,  
Казался — млел любовью страстной  
К Милене пламенной Милон.

Открылся он — она краснела,  
Любовь ее пронзала грудь;  
Скрыть мысли, чувства не умела,  
Могла лишь тяжело вздохнуть:  
Счастливой юноша наверно  
Тогда узнал, что был любим,  
И ей поклялся лицемерно,  
Что будет счастливо жить с ним.

Вотще ее остерегали,  
Вотще советовали ей,  
Вотще примеры предлагали,  
Разсудок пробуждая в ней;  
Им очарованна Милена  
Вещала только: — «Ах, люблю!  
«Ну что до вечного мне плена;  
«С ним свой покой не погублю.»

И что же? С ним соединилась  
Милена кроткая навек;  
Едва блаженством насладилась,  
Как слезной ток из глаз потек:  
Милон уже не богом зрится,  
Неопытным дает урок;  
Ужь в нем пленявший призрак тмится  
И виден только лишь игрок,

Игрок, который забывает  
Уже не редко сам себя,  
Клятвопреступником бывает,  
Еще несчастную любя.  
— Где честь, где счастье, где слава,  
Которой ей польстил Милон?  
И сама любовь отравя.  
Но, ах! таков ли только он?

И таковаль была Милена?  
Всмотритесь только вы в нее:  
В лице, во нраве перемена;  
Никак нельзя узнать ее.  
Ланиты бледностью покрылись,  
Улыбки нет ужь на устах,  
Унынием черты затмились,  
И часто слезы на глазах.

Любезны девушки! страшитесь  
И вы коварных слов мужчин,  
Их козней хитрых берегитесь,  
Остерегайтесь их личин!  
Нельзя проникнуть вам в их тоны,

Ни замыслы их предузнать;  
Поверьте — все они Милоны,  
Не свой умеют вид казать:

Любитель Бахуса усердный  
Вам мнится трезвой человек,  
Цирцей боготворитель вредный  
От них представится далек,  
Ревнивец видится безпечным,  
Роскошным кажется скупец,  
А злой тиран добросердечным,  
И самой скромностью — глупец.

На братцев вы своих взгляните  
И взвесьте верно их слова;  
Их дома, в обществе, сравните,  
Согласналь с правдой их молва?  
Не частоль вам они иное  
Про туж Климену говорят,  
Которой лепетав другое,  
В ней два различных вида зрят?

Скажите мне: такиель точно  
Они при людях, как одни?  
Для обществ, будто бы нарочно,  
Всегда притворствуют они.  
Так точно и для вас мущины  
Имеют маски на запас;  
Но дома, сбросивши личины,  
Не то ужь думают про вас.

Сперва сердец им не давайте,  
А справьетесь верней о них;

Их исту славу узнавайте,  
 А там — уже любите их;  
 Любите их, коль не актеры  
 Они покажутся ужь вам,  
 И не боясь иметь к ним веры,  
 Их верьте взглядам и словам.

Тогда пленившись, пленяйте,  
 И счастье составя их,  
 Обет священный сохраняйте,  
 Не переменяйтесь ввек для них;  
 Не сделайте хамелеоны  
 И сами вы для них под час,  
 Чтобы и их сердечны стоны  
 Во лжи не обличили вас.

### ***Lesson to Young Girls***<sup>26</sup>

*Dear girls! You should be wary of  
 Our age-old enemies,  
 Protect yourselves from cunning men,  
 Ignore their flattery.  
 Too often, like the treacherous snake,  
 That tricked our mother Eve,  
 They promise glory, happiness,  
 Then it's too late to grieve.*

*Mostly they are hypocrites,  
 Laughing just at you,  
 Don't rush to put your faith in them,  
 Or think their words are true.  
 And don't believe their ardent glances,  
 Nor their heaviest sighs,*

---

<sup>26</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.



*Don't let your heart be poisoned by  
The honey of false bees.*

*For with their gazes full of love,  
They promise paradise,  
Their sweetened conversation cheers you  
With its happiness.  
But yet their hearts are closed to you,  
You do not know their thoughts,  
With expert cunning camouflaged,  
Their words mean something else.*

*You are unwise if you ignore  
Unflattering advice  
From mothers who, because of love,  
Will try to keep you safe.  
They would protect you from deceit,  
The enemies' crafty tricks:  
Among a group of slaves are tyrants,  
Freedom's bound in chains.*

*Oh girls, o beauties, you must be  
Always vigilant,  
Be shy of listening to your hearts,  
They will deceive you too.  
Too often, where you think there's joy,  
There's cruel and bitter days;  
For once you've ruined your youth forever  
Your soul will die away.*

*Don't rush to enter into marriage,  
Or flee your parents' home  
Because a false dream's blinded you,*

*Don't err in being kind;  
 You shouldn't grow ungrateful to  
 The parents that you have;  
 Just think — all flatterers are cunning; —  
 You don't want them instead.*

*A good example is Milena,  
 Imprisoned by Milon;  
 What a change in her he wrought  
 When just two years had gone.  
 While living with her kin at home  
 She blossomed like a rose,  
 Flew like a butterfly, and played,  
 She kissed them tenderly.*

*Blessed with goodness and fine brains  
 To equal high degree!  
 Her even temper never failed,  
 Her laughter was like May.  
 At balls, in company, and home  
 Milena always thrived,  
 She had not had to get to know  
 Sorrow yet, or boredom.*

*But then appeared, to her misfortune,  
 From God knows where, Milon,  
 With inexperienced eyes she thought  
 He was a Genius;  
 He seemed the God of Thunder, with  
 Attendant triumph and glory,  
 Accepting gifts from all the world,  
 A radiant deity,*

*Or like a warrior famous for  
His wondrous deeds and feats,  
His helmet wound with laurel wreaths  
Was eloquent enough.  
This Milon was a fine young man,  
He seemed both kind and tender,  
This fiery man appeared to swoon  
With ardour for Milena.*

*When he declared himself, she blushed,  
For love had pierced her breast,  
Not hiding how she thought and felt,  
She gave a heavy sigh.  
And then the happy man, I guess,  
Could see that he was loved,  
Then, hypocrite, he promised her  
A happy life with him.*

*In vain they tried to warn her off,  
In vain they gave advice,  
In vain presented precedents,  
To get her to see sense.  
Milena, though, was quite bewitched,  
Could only talk of love,  
'I can't conceive of life as prison,  
I'll never risk our peace.'*

*What next? Well, very soon Milena  
Joined with him forever,  
She'd hardly time to taste the bliss  
When tears began to flow.  
Milon no longer seemed a God,  
Young girls must learn from this,*

*His spirit that bewitched her fades,  
A player's all that's left,*

*A player that forgets himself,  
And not infrequently,  
Who, while still loving this poor girl,  
Will often break his vow.  
Where's the honour, glory, joy,  
That Milon used to flatter,  
His love itself turns into poison,  
Is he the only one?*

*And what about Milena, then,  
Just take a look at her:  
Her face has changed, her nature too,  
She's not her former self.  
Her cheeks now have a paler hue,  
No smile plays on her lips,  
Her features darken with depression,  
Her eyes are full of tears.*

*Dear girls! You should be fearful of  
The cunning words of men,  
Protect yourselves from their intrigues,  
Watch out for their disguise!  
You cannot fathom all their wiles,  
Their schemes you can't predict,  
But all of them are Milons, though  
They know to hide this truth.*

*Even Bacchus's faithful love  
Will seem a sober man,  
While Circe's bad admirer seems*

*A million miles from them,  
An envious man will seem carefree,  
The miser to splash out,  
A fool embodies modesty,  
The tyrant a kind heart.*

*Just take a close look at your brothers,  
Carefully weigh their words;  
How do they act at home, with others,  
Do their words ring true?  
Did not they speak about Klimena  
At home with different words,  
From those they babbled to the girl  
Of who they hold two views?*

*And are they really just the same  
With people and at home?  
When in society, it seems,  
They always act a part.  
It's just the same for you, those men  
Will always wear a mask;  
Once home, they cast off their disguise  
And with it, thoughts of you.*

*Don't give away your heart to start with,  
First find out the truth.  
Discover first their true fame, then  
You're free to fall in love;  
So love them if it seems to you  
That they're not only actors,  
Believe their gazes and their words  
And feel they can be trusted.*

*Then once bewitched, you must bewitch,  
 And as you bring them joy,  
 Be sure to keep your sacred vows,  
 Don't change yourselves for them.  
 Don't turn into chameleons  
 Because you want to please,  
 Make sure their heartfelt groans will not  
 Discover that you've lied.*

### **Вчерашняя ворожба<sup>27</sup>**

Вот, ворожейка,  
 Вот дорогая,  
 Масти бубновой  
 Милой Король!  
 В душе унылой,  
 С горестным сердцем,  
 Я загадала  
 Кой-что о нем;  
 Ты мне всю правду,  
 Без лицемерства,  
 Верно по картам,  
 Внято скажи!  
 Чтож? «Возмущают  
 «С кралей червонной  
 «Пики и трефы  
 «Мысли его.  
 «Краля червонна,  
 «Либо крестова,  
 «Лишь занимает  
 «Его собой.  
 «Но — вот другая,  
 «Пикова дама,

---

<sup>27</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84.

«Хитро, лукаво  
«Сеет меж их  
«Грусть, сокрушение  
«Недоумение,  
«Ложь и обманы,  
«Ссоры, вражду.  
«Я из колоды  
«Выну ль крестову,  
«Или червонну  
«Кралю ему,  
«Все равномерно  
«Мрачные мысли,  
«Черные думы  
«Сердце гнетут.  
«Видишь, все пики  
«С трефами злобно  
«Прямо на сердце  
«Горем лежат.»  
— Будет, довольно;  
Я не желаю  
Горестной правды  
Более знать;  
Здравой разсудок  
Мне запрещает,  
О ворожейка!  
Верить тебе.  
Естьли и верю  
Я по неволе  
Карт предсказанью, —  
Их не боюсь.  
Пусть их болтают  
Грозные бури,  
Мрачные тучи,

Скорби для нас;  
Но благоденство,  
Дружба с любовью,  
Вера с надеждой  
В наших сердцах.  
Пикова дама,  
Злая, коварна!  
Жало змеино  
Тщетно оstriшь!  
Тщетно ласкаешь,  
Тщетно пленяешь  
Ты лицемерством  
Злобным своим!  
Неколебимо  
Верное сердце,  
Твердым гранитом  
Грозно стоит,  
И непорочность,  
Левой рукою  
Взявшись за якорь,  
В правую крест,  
Злость презирая,  
Смотрит спокойно  
На небеса:  
Там Покровитель  
Добрых, безвинных,  
Нежно любящих,  
Правых людей,  
Силой всемогущей  
И невидимой  
От лицемерных  
Их бережет.  
На Провиденье



Кто уповаает  
С кротким смиреньем,  
Тот не погиб!  
Трефову кралю,  
Кралю любезну,  
Адскою злобой  
Втуне язвишь;  
Черныя масти,  
Масти зловещи,  
Тщетно тобою  
Гибель гласят.  
Только бубновой,  
Доброй, любезной,  
Нежной и умной,  
Милой Король,  
Крали крестовой  
Верное сердце  
Страстно любящим  
Сердцем пленил:  
Был, есть и будет  
Вечно достоин  
Крали сей милой  
Только лишь он;  
Ей не опасны  
Целаго света  
Трефовой масти  
Все короли.  
— Пикова дама!  
Из паутины  
Тщетно сплетаешь  
Сети ты ей;  
Трефами тщетно  
Ты уповаешь

В доме бубновом  
Ад поселить;  
Ужом и жабой,  
Хитрой лисою,  
Ты понапрасну  
Сеешь раздор:  
Хоть чарадейством  
Злая колдунья,  
Ты уронила  
Искру в сей дом;  
Искра хоть тлеет,  
Хоть раздуваешь  
Ты потихоньку,  
Злая! ее;  
Но не удастся,  
Пикова дама!  
Злобе строптивой  
Сделать пожар:  
Очарованья,  
Шпанския башни,  
Хитрость, коварство,  
Тщетны твои.  
Ангел хранитель,  
Сила небесна,  
Благословенье  
Бога любви,  
Здравой разумок  
И благородство  
Добраго сердца,  
Нежной души,  
Дружба с любовью,  
С новой надеждой,  
С отроком юным

Вооружась,  
Щит и ограда  
И оборона  
Трефовой крали  
Против тебя.  
Зри же: бубновой,  
Любви достойной,  
Благоразумной,  
Доброй Король  
Злость презирает,  
Топчет ногами  
Пиковой масти  
Гнусную ложь;  
Он, улыбаясь,  
С Ангельским взором  
Вырвал из сердца  
Острой кинжал.  
Тщетно тлетворной  
Яд проливает  
Пикова дама  
В душу его;  
Верь, безизвестный  
Злобе, коварству,  
У благодетельных  
Есть антидот.  
Стрелы калены  
Взглядом строптивым  
Тщетно ты мечешь  
В мысли его;  
Дух благотворный,  
Гений незримый  
Их отражает  
Все от него;

Тайные ковы,  
Хитрия козни  
Мощной рукою  
В прах превратит.  
Пикова дама!  
Грянет перуном  
Бог справедливый,  
Эй, берегись!  
Облаки черны,  
Тучи, ненастье,  
Скоро промчатся,  
Бури пройдут,  
И добродетель  
Снова возблещет,  
Истинной славой  
Свет озарит.  
Взглянет — и правда  
Гнусность покажет,  
Пикова дама!  
Людам твою;  
Король бубновой  
С трефовой кралей  
Жизни блаженство  
Вновь обретет.  
Ты же в презреньи,  
В уничиженьи  
Будешь терзаться  
Лютой тоской;  
Как от эхидны  
Добрые люди  
Все удалятся  
Прочь от тебя.  
Пикова дама!

Будешь — но поздно,  
 Тяжко вздыхая,  
 Каяться ты.  
 Злым сокрушение,  
 Кара лукавым,  
 Добрым награда,  
 Правым венец  
 Сладости райской,  
 Жизни блаженной,  
 Истинной славы  
 Нежной любви.

***Yesterday's Reading***<sup>28</sup>

*So, fortune-teller,  
 So, my dear,  
 It's the gentle King  
 Of diamonds here.  
 With heavy soul  
 And sorry heart,  
 Have I divined  
 Some news of him;  
 Now tell the truth,  
 With no pretence,  
 What, truly, do  
 The cards reveal?  
 What's this? 'The Queen  
 Of hearts, she and  
 The spades and clubs  
 Disturb his thoughts.  
 The Queen of hearts  
 Or Queen of clubs  
 Will occupy*

---

<sup>28</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*Him with themselves.  
But here's one more,  
The Queen of spades,  
And sly intrigue  
She sows for them;  
Now sorrow, grief,  
And now confusion,  
Lies, deceit,  
And enmity.  
And now I draw  
One from the pack,  
Will his Queen be  
From clubs or hearts?  
All the signs  
Are looking sad,  
All thoughts are black,  
Oppress the heart.  
The clubs and spades  
Maliciously  
Lie on the heart  
Like misery.'  
It's clear enough  
So spare me from  
Discovering more  
This sorry truth.  
My common sense  
Does not allow  
Me, fortune-teller,  
To believe.  
And if I can't  
But help believe  
The cards' predictions,  
I'll not fear.*

*Though they be shaken  
By dreadful thunder,  
Brooding clouds,  
And endless grief,  
Yet happiness  
And loving friendship,  
Hope, belief  
Live in our hearts!  
O Queen of Spades,  
Sly, evil one!  
In vain you bear  
Your snake-like sting,  
In vain you use  
Such double-dealing  
To bewitch  
With tenderness.  
Unshakeable,  
A heart that's true  
Can stand its ground  
Like granite stone.  
And innocence  
With its left hand  
Will take the anchor,  
Cross in right,  
And scorning malice,  
Looks up, calm  
Unto the Heavens:  
Protector of  
The good and pure,  
The ones that love,  
The righteous ones;  
Invisible  
Omnipotence*

*Protects them from  
The hypocrites.  
Whoever trusts  
In Providence,  
Is humble, gentle,  
Won't be lost!  
In vain your evil  
Malice wounds  
The Queen of clubs,  
Obliging queen;  
And though black suits  
Are ominous,  
In vain do you  
Foretell of death.  
Only the diamond,  
Courteous, kind,  
Tender, clever,  
Sweet-hearted king,  
Can use his heart  
That burns aflame,  
Can take her heart  
The Queen of clubs.  
Only this king  
Was, is and will be  
Worthy forever  
Of this sweet queen;  
All the kings  
Of all the clubs  
In all the world  
Can't threaten her.  
O Queen of spades!  
In vain you weave  
A trap for her*



*A spider's web;  
In vain you trust  
The clubs to make  
All hell break loose  
In the diamonds' suit;  
With snake and toad,  
A cunning fox,  
In vain you seek  
To sow discord.  
And should your magic,  
Evil sorceress,  
Kindle a spark  
Inside this house,  
You'll find that spark  
Will only smoulder,  
Though you blow  
To make it glow.  
But Queen of spades,  
Your stubborn ire  
Will not succeed  
In kindling fire:  
Your sorcery,  
Your blackened towers,  
Your cunning schemes  
Are all in vain.  
The guardian angel,  
Heavenly force,  
The blessing of  
The God of love,  
Nobility,  
And common sense  
Of a gentle heart,  
Of a tender soul,*

*Loving friendship  
With new hope  
Will arm itself  
With a young man,  
Her shield, defence,  
Her barricade,  
The Queen of clubs  
Sets up against you.  
See the good king,  
Worthy of love,  
Blessed with sense,  
The King of diamonds,  
Evil he scorns,  
He tramples over  
The low and base  
Lies of the spades.  
He, with a smile,  
The gaze of an angel,  
Tore from the heart  
A sharpened blade.  
The Queen of spades—  
In vain she pours  
The noxious poison  
Into his soul.  
Unknown to evil,  
To cunning, you see,  
The noble ones have  
An antidote.  
The burning arrows,  
Like stubborn glares  
Aimed at his thoughts,  
Are all in vain;  
His wholesome spirit,*

*His unseen genius,  
Deflects them all  
Away from him.  
Your secret snares  
And cunning schemes  
His mighty hand  
Will turn to dust.  
Queen of spades!  
The just God threatens  
Thunderbolts,  
You'd best watch out!  
These heavy clouds,  
Inclement weather  
Will soon have passed,  
The storms will die.  
And once again  
Will virtue shine,  
And genuine glory  
Shall light the world.  
One look, and Truth,  
O Queen of spades,  
Will show your baseness  
To the world,  
The King of diamonds,  
The Queen of clubs  
Will bring once more  
Bliss into life.  
You will be scorned,  
You will be humbled,  
You'll be plagued with  
Ferocious grief.  
And all good people  
Will avoid you,*

*Keep away, as  
 From Echidna.  
 Queen of spades,  
 You will—though late,  
 And breathing hard,—  
 You will repent.  
 Ruin to Evil,  
 Scourge to the Sly,  
 Rewards to the Good  
 To the Just a crown  
 Of heavenly sweetness,  
 Blissful life,  
 Of genuine glory,  
 Tender love.*

### **Купидонова лотерея<sup>29</sup>**

Вдруг явился перед нами  
 Бог всечтимый, милой, злой;  
 Полон был колчан стрелами,  
 Лук в руках и с тетивой.  
 Испугавшись Амура,  
 Мы вскричали: Купидон!  
 «Что, узнали белокура!»  
 Нам сказал с усмешкой он,

И примолвил: «Успокойтесь!  
 «Не стрелять в сердца хочу;  
 «Хитрых умыслов не бойтесь:  
 «Мир я с вами заключу.»  
 Золотыми он ключами  
 Отпер кованой ларец,  
 И разсыпал перед нами

---

<sup>29</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–58.

Он тьму тьмущую сердец.

«Содержу я лотерею  
«И билеты раздаю;  
«Сих сердец судьбой владею,  
«Их охотно вам даю.  
«Вот все призы перед вами;  
«Тут пустых билетцов нет  
«Я согласен, чтоб вы сами  
«Брали из любых билет.

«Для себя и для любезных  
«Вынимайте вы из них;  
«Что до мыслей бесполезных!  
«Оставляйте смело их.  
«Чтож? разыгрывать начните  
«Лотерею вы мою;  
«Не робейте и взгляните  
«На судьбину вы свою.»

Вмиг Алина подбежала,  
Торопливо взяв билет,  
Как всегда воображала,  
Прочитала так ответ:  
«Доброй, милой, о! довольно,  
«Но притом и — вертопрах.»  
Тут Алина и невольно  
Ощутила в сердце страх.

Удалец Тирсис проворно  
К Купидону подскочил;  
Тот, мигнув ему притворно,  
Взять билетец научил.

«И мила, и благонравна,  
 «Остроумна, не бедна;  
 — Он кричит ужь: славна, славна! —  
 «Но — чрезмеру ветрена.»

«Твой черед, драгая Ниса!»

Говорит ей Купидон.

«С красотою Адониса

«Настоящий Селадон.»

Взяв билетец, прочитала

Ниса те слова лишь в нем,

Покраснев, захохотала;

Но былаль довольна им?

Богатон спешит надменно

И берет билетец свой;

Развернув его мгновенно,

Он читает: «Жребий твой

«Быть постылыми любимым,

«О несклонной век тужить,

«Быть златым болваном чтимым

«И с немилой сердцу жить.»

Вот подходит скромно Ида,

Взяв читает свой билет:

«Снова, Филемон, Бавкида!

«Образ ваш увидит свет.

«Кто не слишком много чаёт

«И доволен малым кто,

«От судьбы тот получает

«Больше во сто крат за то.»

Лиодор в недоуменье

К Купидону подошел:  
Сей решил его сомненье,  
Он такой ответ нашел:  
«Будь судьбой своей доволен,  
«Но притом и терпелив;  
«Сколько ты того достоин,  
«Будешь милою счастлив.»

Вот теперь читает Флена:  
«Крез, ревнивец и глупец,  
«Пред тобой став на колена,  
«Поднесет тебе венец.»  
Флена рвет билет с досадой,  
Говоря: о! чорт с тобой!  
Ужь сокровищем, наградой  
Я утешена судьбой!

Купидон ей улынулся,  
«Что же делать?» он сказал, —  
К Миловзору обернулся,  
Лотерею указал.  
«Ужь таланты и богатство,  
«Знатный род и красота,  
«Но душевные приятства  
«Для тебя — одна мечта.»

Вынимает свой Аглая  
И читает: «Милый твой,  
«Лишь одной тобой пылая,  
«Сокрушит тебя тоской.»  
Флоре: „Всякою порою  
«Станет милой досаждать,  
«С Бахусом, или игрою

«Будет время провождать.»

Зрит Любим в своем билете:

«Милая твоя жена —

«Cosa-gara в белом свете —

«И сгубит тебя она.

«Хитрый ум, коварство, злоба,

«Все съединяся в ней,

«Преждевременно дверь гроба

«Для тебя отворят ей.»

И Темира чередую

Получила свой билет:

«Там сказать, с седой брадою

«Дедушка в полсотни лет.

«Не крутись, хотя и скучно

«В младости со старцем жить;

«Будешь жить благополучно,

«Не научиться тужить.»

Выпал жеребей Авроре:

«Ты прельстишь питомца Муз,

«Им пленишься ты, и — вскоре

«Заклужишь ты с ним союз.»

Вот уж с робостью подходит

Хлоя к Купидону вновь

И в билетике находит

Благоденство и любовь.

Лида, взяв с пренебреженьем,

Прочитала свой билет:

«Все взирают с уваженьем

«На драгой тебе предмет.



«Славен храбрыми делами,  
 «Млад, наружностью пригож,  
 «Добр, нельстивыми словами  
 «И душой с тобою схож.»

Купидон сказал: «Лаура!  
 «Для чего же ты нейдешь?»  
 Нет мне призов у Амура.  
 «Так для милых их найдешь.  
 «Только три уже остались,  
 «Все для сродников твоих;  
 «Хоть последние достались,  
 «Так и быть, возьми хоть их.»

«Вот Всемилова невеста!  
 «Не богата, не бедна,  
 «Видом и душой Прелеста,  
 «Нравом ангел, и умна;  
 «Благородны сердца чувства  
 «С милой простотою в ней,  
 «И приятныя искусства  
 «Будет в суженой твоей.»

Сей Милону: «Ты сердечно  
 «Будешь добрую любить;  
 «О судьбе своей конечно  
 «Ты не станешь слезы лить:  
 «Будешь в милой ты уверен,  
 «И не будешь больше вновь  
 «Ни возлюбленной неверен,  
 «Ни в досаде на любовь.»

Миловиду: «Благонравна,

«Прозорлива и скромна,  
«Завсегда веселонравна,  
«И отнюдь не ветрена.  
«Не красавица собою,  
«Но довольно хороша;  
«Будешь счастлив ты судьбою:  
«В милой — милая душа.»

Я руками всплескала,  
Сердцем радовалась я;  
Ах! каких невест искала,  
Тех найдут мои друзья!  
Но сколь я неосторожно  
Позабыла одного;  
Все билеты: где же можно  
Взять еще и для него?

Купидон хитрец смеется  
И вручает мне билет. —  
Милолику достается  
Милой Душеньки портрет.  
«Кто полюбит так сердечно,  
«Как я первую любил,  
«То вторую всеконечно  
«Для того я сохранил.»

Низко, низко поклонилась  
За билетец я его,  
А за сердце поручилась  
Милолика своего.  
Тут мгновенно нас оставил  
Дорогой наш Купидон;  
Лотереей нам доставил

Горе, смех и радость он.

***Cupid's Lottery***<sup>30</sup>

*Suddenly he stood before us,  
Much-esteemed, a god who's kind, yet  
Cruel, his quiver full of arrows,  
Bow in hand, the string pulled taut.  
After taking fright at Eros,  
'Cupid!', we exclaimed aloud.  
With a laugh he spoke to us,  
'So, you recognized my curls!'*

*Then he added, 'Calm yourselves,  
I don't want to pierce your hearts,  
Do not fear my cunning tricks,  
I am here to make my peace.'  
Then he took a golden key,  
Opened up his tempered casket,  
Scattered from it at our feet  
Innumerable little hearts.*

*'I will hold a lottery,  
There are tickets for you all,  
All these hearts are in my power,  
I will pass them on to you.  
All the tickets win a prize,  
There will be no losers here,  
I declare that you can choose  
Any ticket that you wish.*

*For yourself, and those you love,  
Pick a ticket, any one,*

---

<sup>30</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*As for thoughts of hopelessness,  
Put them boldly to the side.  
Are you ready to begin,  
Take part in my lottery?  
Take a look at your own fate,  
Don't be shy now, come and see.*

*All at once Alina ran,  
Took a ticket quickly, then,  
Conceited, much as usual,  
Read the answer she had picked:  
'Good and kind—O! good enough  
But nonetheless a featherbrain,'  
Then Alina felt her heart  
Fill with fear beyond control.*

*Next brave Tirsis, in a flash,  
Leaping up, to Cupid went,  
Cupid winked at him in jest,  
Showed him how to pick his fate.  
'Sweet, sweet-natured too she'll be,  
With sharp wits, and yet not poor;'  
Tirsis cried, 'That's great! That's great!'  
'But she's much too scatter-brained!'*

*'Now it's your turn, Nisa, dear,'  
Were the next words Cupid said,  
'With the beauty of Adonis,  
He's a real-life Celadon.'  
With the ticket in her hand,  
Nisa read these words alone,  
Then she blushed and gave a laugh,  
Was she happy with her fate?*

*Bogaton then hurries proudly,  
 It's his turn to pick a ticket,  
 Straight away he turns it over,  
 There he reads 'This is your fate...  
 To be loved by the repugnant,  
 To regret an unkind time,  
 To be classed a golden fool,  
 Live with one you cannot love.'*

*Modestly now Ida walks up,  
 Takes her ticket, now she reads,  
 'Once more, Philemon and Baucis,  
 Will your images see the light.  
 Those who don't expect too much,  
 Those content with a small lot,  
 They will find that fate rewards them  
 More than hundredfold for that.'*

*Liodor now in a quandary,  
 Takes his turn to go to Cupid,  
 Cupid soon dispels his doubt,  
 Here's the answer he received:  
 'Be content with what fate gives you,  
 And be at the same time patient,  
 You'll receive the happiness  
 You've warranted through how you've lived.'*

*Now we see how Flena reads:  
 'Croesus, what a jealous fool,  
 Humbly kneeling down before you  
 Brings his offer of a crown.'  
 Flena says 'To hell with you',*

*Rips her ticket angrily,  
 'I will be consoled by fate  
 With a fortune and reward.'*

*Cupid looked at her and smiled,  
 Said, 'What is there to be done?'  
 Then he turned to Milovzor,  
 Pointed to the lottery.  
 'She'll be blessed with talent, riches,  
 Noble name and handsome face,  
 But the pleasures of the soul  
 Will be elusive dreams for you.'*

*Then Aglaia takes her turn,  
 On the ticket reads 'Your dearest  
 Burns with passion just for you  
 But will crush you with his grief.'  
 Flora next: 'At any time  
 Your beloved will annoy,  
 He'll seek out for company  
 Bacchus, or a game of cards.'*

*In his ticket Liubim sees:  
 'Una cosa rara in the  
 Whole wide world is your dear wife,  
 She will bring you ruin, you'll see.  
 Cunning thoughts, malicious, sly,  
 All these qualities combined,  
 She will pave the way for you,  
 Push you to an early grave.'*

*Then Temira's turn was next,  
 She received her ticket, read:*

*'Well, he'll have a grey beard, see,  
Granddad, half a century old,  
Not to worry, though it's boring  
Living with old age in youth,  
You'll be living comfortably,  
You'll not learn of misery.*

*Here's the fate Aurora took:  
'You'll attract the Muses' child,  
He will capture you — and soon,  
You will seal your bond with him.'  
Now once more, but timidly,  
Chloe makes her way to Cupid,  
In her ticket now she finds  
Happiness and also love.*

*Lida's turn to read the ticket  
That she took with some disdain:  
'Everyone will have respect  
For the one who's dear to you.  
Famous for his brave heroics,  
Young, and easy on the eye,  
Kind, his words are genuine,  
And his soul is close to yours.'*

*Cupid then said, 'Laura, tell me,  
Why do you not take your turn?'  
'Eros has no prize for me.'  
'Choose then, for your dearest ones.  
Now that only three are left,  
All of these are for your friends,  
Though you've got the last ones left,  
So be it, they're yours to take.'*

*'Here's a bride for Vsemilov!  
 She's not rich, but neither poor,  
 With the look and soul of Prelest,  
 And an angel's nature, smart,  
 In her heart are noble feelings,  
 She is sweet simplicity,  
 In the girl you are betrothed to  
 All the pleasant arts combine.'*

*This to Milon: 'Earnestly  
 You'll adore a lovely girl,  
 You will have no cause to shed  
 Tears for how your fate's turned out.  
 You'll be certain of your lover,  
 And you'll never need again  
 To have doubts of your beloved,  
 You will not grow tired of love!'*

*To Milovid: 'She's noble-natured,  
 Modest and has fine insight,  
 Always of a cheerful nature,  
 Yet you'd not say scatter-brained.  
 Not a beauty in herself,  
 But her looks are good enough,  
 You'll be happy with your fate,  
 Your beloved's soul is dear.'*

*I threw up my hands with joy,  
 Celebrated in my heart;  
 Just the kinds of brides I'd hoped  
 All my friends were going to find.  
 But I've acted carelessly,*



*And forgotten one last man.  
All the tickets gone, where can  
One last fate be found for him?*

*Cunning Cupid gave a laugh,  
Handed me another ticket,  
And for Milolik I have  
A portrait of a dear Sweetheart.  
'He who loves as faithfully,  
As I loved my first beloved,  
Loves the second just the same,  
That's why I've saved this for him.'*

*Then I bowed so low, so low,  
Thanking him for this, his ticket,  
And assured him that I was  
Sure of Milolik's true heart.  
Then quite suddenly he left us,  
Cupid, who's so dearly loved,  
With his lottery he gave us  
Sorrow, laughter, also joy.*

### **К судьбе<sup>31</sup>**

Скажи, проказница старушка,  
Которую зовут Судьбой!  
Уже ли я тебе игрушка,  
Что так мудришь ты со мной?

То вдруг меня ты приласкаешь,  
То прочь с досадой оттолкнешь;  
То близко к счастью подпускаешь,  
То в пропасть лютых бед столкнешь.

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<sup>31</sup> Naumova 1819, 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64.

То путь усеешь мой цветами,  
То терн посадишь на него;  
То окружишь меня друзьями,  
То всех возмешь до одного.

От горяль отдыхать я стану, —  
Ты тотчас снова мне грозишь;  
Лишь чуть крушиться перестану,  
Меня, иль милых мне разишь.

Я не сказала бы и слова  
Противу строгости твоей,  
Когдаб, ко мне ты быв сурова,  
Не трогала моих друзей;

А то и очень сердцу больно,  
Что ты ужь добралась до них.  
Что ни терплю — все не довольно;  
Нет, нада тормошить и их.

Ну, гдеб когда ты ни бродила,  
А в хижинку мою зайдешь;  
Путем ни раз не выходила,  
Все что нибудь да уведешь:

То резвы игры, то утехи,  
Здоровье, радость, иль покой;  
То удовольствие и смехи  
Прочь гонишь ты своей клюкой.

Добро бы чем я докучала  
Неумолимая! тебе;

Пущай бы ты тогда ворчала  
И знать давала о себе;

А то, живу уединенно,  
Друзьями, лирой веселюсь,  
Живу спокойно и смиренно  
И за фортуной не стремлюсь,

И тут тебе досадно стало,  
И ты наслала злых людей.  
К чему так умничать пристало  
И ссорить искренних друзей?

Иль мало я еще терпела  
В прошедши годы от тебя?  
В шестнадцать лет осиротела,  
Крутила горестью себя;

Лишилася я сердцу милых  
И кровных тратила своих;  
В воспоминаниях унылых  
Искала тщетно призрак их.

Скажи, на что еще завидно?  
Что лишнего еще нашла?  
Старушка! Бабушка! обидно —  
И за последним ты пришла.

О чем, скажи, еще хлопчешь?  
Что надо милости твоей?  
Чего еще, чего ты хочешь  
Из бедной хиженки моей?

Здоровья что ли? На полтину  
Его и нищим не продашь,  
И живописцу на картину  
Ты ни одной черты не дашь.

Красы? — подавно не бывало.  
Веселья? — вовсе ничего,  
И удовольствие пропало.  
Покоя? — Нет ужь и его.

Фантазия, — и та затмилась,  
И лира изредка звучит;  
Воображенье притупилось  
И Муза робкая молчит.

Взгляни: вот я сам-друг с тоскою  
С утра до вечера сижу,  
Залившись слезною рекою,  
На лик Спасителя гляжу.

Ты горе не возмешь с собою,  
И слез не надобно тебе;  
А Муза с лирой пред тобою:  
Возьми пожалуй их себе.

Но больше, право, мне не можно  
Тебе представить ничего;  
Ужель отнимешь ты безбожно  
Надежду сердца моего?

Нет, бабушка! хоть разсердися,  
Ее из хижинки моей  
Ты увести отнюдь не льстися;

До гроба не разстанусь с ней!

Ты сколько ни грозись, не можешь  
Противу правды ничего;  
Ты истину не переможешь.  
Убойся Бога самого!

Ты гонишь нас несправедливо  
В угодность зависти людей;  
Мы страдаем терпеливо  
И вновь дождемся ясных дней.

Ну, ныне для чего изволишь  
Ты буйной головой качать?  
За чем меня с друзьями школишь,  
Чтоб так лишь, только огорчать?

Учи себе людей коварных,  
Лукавых, хитрых усмири,  
Исправь сердца неблагодарных,  
А нас безвинных примири!

### ***To Fate***<sup>32</sup>

*Tell me, whimsical old lady,  
Whom we usually know as Fate!  
Do you see me as a plaything,  
Since you treat me in this way?*

*Now you see fit to caress me,  
Now, annoyed, push me away,  
Now you let me near to joy, yet,  
Now I'm back to misery.*

---

<sup>32</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*Now you strew my path with flowers,  
Now it's thick with thorny sloe,  
Now my friends are all around me,  
Now you take them all away.*

*As soon as respite comes from sadness,  
Straight away your threat returns,  
Once I start to leave my grief, you  
Strike me, or the ones I love.*

*I'd not say a word against such  
Harsh severity, if when  
You dealt a fate that's cruel to me,  
You'd only leave my friends alone;*

*But you've caused my heart such pain,  
Because you've touched their lives as well,  
It seems my sufferings aren't enough,  
No—then you have to plague them too.*

*And when you've been out wandering  
And called into my humble home,  
Always have you taken something  
When the time has come to go.*

*Now it's playful games, now pleasure,  
Health or happiness, now peace;  
Now your stick will chase away  
Laughter and contentedness.*

*It's not as though I've pestered you,  
Or never ceased to bother you!*

*Then I grant that you would grumble,  
Let me know the way you felt.*

*But my life is solitary,  
Just my friends and lyre give joy,  
Peace and calm are all, I don't  
Go seeking out a better lot.*

*Still you get annoyed by this,  
Evil people come my way,  
Why plague me with your clever tricks,  
And drive a wedge between good friends?*

*Is it that I've suffered little,  
In the last few years from you?  
At sixteen I was an orphan,  
Misery enveloped me.*

*My heart's lost so many dear ones,  
And I've lost my flesh and blood,  
Though I scour my painful memories,  
Nowhere can I find their ghosts.*

*Tell me, is there more you covet?  
Is there something else to take?  
Oh, old woman, I'd be outraged  
If you've come for what I've left.*

*Tell me what more are you seeking?  
What else is it you desire?  
What more can it be that you would  
Take from my poor little home?*

*Health? You could not sell mine for  
Two or three roubles to the poor,  
I've no feature you could give  
An artist to adorn his work.*

*Beauty? I've had none a long time,  
Joy—no, none of that at all.  
Contentment? No, there is none left,  
And there is no peace either now.*

*Imagination—that's now dimmed,  
Now my lyre rarely sounds,  
All my thoughts have grown quite blunt,  
And the timid muse stays quiet.*

*Here I am with double sorrow,  
Here I sit from dawn to dusk,  
When I've shed a pool of tears  
I gaze upon the Saviour's face.*

*You won't take this sorrow with you,  
And you have no need of tears,  
Here's the Muse, her lyre with her,  
Take them, if that's what you please.*

*But apart from this, it's true,  
There's nothing I can offer you,  
I can't believe you'd be so cruel,  
To take away my heart's last hope.*

*No, even though you may be angry,  
Don't you dare to try to take  
This from my little cottage, no,*



*I'll take my last hope to the grave.*

*Nothing that you say can change,  
Do anything against the truth.  
You cannot change reality,  
And even you fear God himself.*

*It isn't fair, the way you leave us  
Subject to some envious whims,  
But patiently we suffer this,  
And wait for better days to come.*

*Why is it now that you see fit  
To shake your head tempestuously,  
Why discipline my friends and me,  
Just to cause us bitterness?*

*By all means, go teach scheming people,  
Stay the cunning and the sly,  
Cure the hearts of the ignoble,  
But let us innocents have peace!*

### **Возражение судьбы**<sup>33</sup>

Старуха предо мной явилась,  
Каких не видывал и свет;  
Нахмуря брови, так бодрилась,  
Как женщина во цвете лет.  
Ко мне взор строгой обращает,  
Ты вызов сделала Судьбе?  
Она с надменностью вещает:  
Я здесь ответствовать тебе.

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<sup>33</sup> Naumova 1819, 'Vorrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75.

И без того уже не мало Неправедных укор:

Хоть чуть кому жить тошно стало,

Кричит, что делаю я вздор.

Свои проказы забывают,

Не взглянет на себя никто,

Судеб Судьбину вызывают,

Ни дай, ни вынеси на что.

Как будто бы я у безделья

Досуг имею завсегда.

Нет, детушки! не до веселья

И мне бывает иногда:

Не шутка править колесницей,

Машину дивную вертеть,

В мои года летая птицей,

Предвидеть все, везде поспеть.

Но вот я, в добрый час собравшись,

Наскуча жалобы сносить,

И от хлопот своих убравшись,

Пришла сама вас допросить!

За чем же днесь, как в древни веки,

Уже вы перестали жить?

Мне делаете вы упреки,

А не хотите послужить?

А ты, не только что словами,

Но потрудила ужь себя

Со мною спор вести стихами;

То начинаю я с тебя.

Пеняешь в том, что огорчаю

Тебя, или друзей твоих,

Что буйной головой качаю

То на тебя я, то на них.

А как бы ты еще и смела  
Со мной в расправу выступать?  
Или разсудку не имела,  
Чтобы так дерзко поступать?  
Одной ли я тобой играю?  
Я всей вселенною верчу;  
Там милую, а здесь караю, —  
Творю, что только захочу.

Ненастье в ведро обративши,  
В день ясный насылаю гром;  
Как лужу море возмутивши,  
Из тишины творю содом;  
Царей я делаю рабами,  
Рабов в вельможи вывожу;  
Явлю безумцев мудрецами,  
Героя в трусе покажу.

Но ни к кому не быв пристрастна,  
Забочусь обо всех равно;  
Мной каждому не понапрасна  
Определение дано.  
Даю, беру и возвращаю  
Блаженство, славу и покой;  
Тому польщу, сему стращаю,  
Сих тешу, тех крушу тоской.

Да против этаго и слова  
Никто и пикнуть мне не смей:  
Добра ли я, или сурова,  
Ко мне почтенье всяк имей.

Я действую по Божьей воле,  
А вы творите по моей;  
И быть должны во всякой доле  
Довольны участью своей.

Хотя и горько — не ропщите  
И лейте слезы про себя,  
Скрепите сердце и молчите,  
Свои вериги возлюбя.  
Я знаю, что мне делать должно  
И для чего и по чему,  
И спорить вам о том не можно,  
Какой я жребий дам кому.

На сем, голубушка! с тобою  
На верной взвешу я безмен,  
Тебе что выдано судьбою,  
За то, что не дано в замен.  
Припомним-ка: иль не видала  
И ты приятных, красных дней?  
Или ни чем не услаждала  
Я горести души твоей?

Когда еще ты не родилась,  
Отца лишилась своего,  
И в детстве ты не насладилась  
Любовью, нежностью его,  
За то еще ль не наделила  
Я доброй матерью тебя?  
Шестнадцать лет ты веселила  
Ея горячностью себя.

Шестнадцать лет не зная печали,

Мой друг! блаженствовала ты,  
Часы на крыльях быстро мчали  
Очаровательны мечты;  
Но срок — на урну ты склонилась  
И слезы горестны ты льешь,  
Сама к себе ты обратилась,  
Себя с тоскою познаешь.

Конечно, поступила строго,  
Немилосердо я с тобой:  
Отрады для тебя немного  
Быть полузрячей, пол-глухой,  
Лица приятность отказала,  
Тебе ум острый не дала,  
Смешной фигурой наказала,  
Быть ловкою не нарекла;

Ну, словом, я определила  
Тебя не бабочкой летать,  
Талантами не наделила,  
Чтоб ими в обществе блистать:  
За то и душу не коварну  
В тебя, мой друг! вложила я,  
Но нежную и благодарну  
Приобрела ты, дочь моя!

Я в список дружества включила,  
Что ты для дружбы рождена,  
И дружеству тебя вручила,  
Ты в дружбе мной награждена;  
Так не пеняй же, что Судьбою  
Ты позабыта навсегда:  
Незримый Гений был с тобою

И не оставит никогда.

Он, руководствуя всечасно  
И сердцем и душой твоей,  
Лишь с волею моей согласно  
Тебе назначил двух друзей;  
Не ими ли в протекши годы  
Ты мной утешена была?  
Но нет весны без непогоды;  
Ты снова слезы пролила.

Так чтож? Не я — злой рок наводит  
На вас безсовестных людей,  
Вражду меж вами производит  
По сродной зависти своей.  
Что делать, детушки любезны!  
Всему своя черда, свой час;  
Теперь упреки бесполезны;  
Я времем оправдаю вас.

И отягченная бедами  
Ты постоянство сохранишь,  
И позабытая друзьями  
По гроб твой им не изменишь.  
Пускай злословие стремится  
Отнять их дружбу у тебя;  
Она в душе твоей хранится  
И ей ты оживи себя.

Не всех несчастнее ты в мире,  
В уединеньи не одна;  
Играешь ты на скромной лире  
И с Музами еще дружна;

Поэзией ты изливаешь  
Все чувства сердца своего,  
Склонясь на лиру, забываешь  
На час ты горести его.

Быв от природы нековарна,  
Пожалуй, пустяков не ври;  
Не будучи неблагодарна,  
Мне вздору ты не говори.  
Когда всех разом отнимала  
Друзей я милых у тебя?  
Но коль лукавых обнимала,  
То в том вини сама себя.

За чем ты, не спросившись броду  
И не узнав сперва людей,  
Изволила соваться в воду?  
А все от простоты своей.  
Ведь тридцать стукнуло, возможно  
Уже собраться и с умом.  
За чем ты так неосторожно  
Связалась дружбой с подлецом?

За чем, на перекор ты свету,  
С коварных маски сорвала?  
За чем фальшивую монету  
Нечистым золотом звала?  
Когдаб смотрела хладнокровна,  
Что все язвят друзей твоих,  
Ты в том бы не была виновна,  
Что остеречь хотела их.

Вперед наука! — Лицемерным

Не доверяй ты никогда,  
И даже с самым другом верным  
Будь искренна, да не всегда.  
Одна ты свет не переучишь,  
Разврат во нравах не смиришь;  
Одним моралью ты наскучишь,  
Других — со смеха уморишь.

Мой друг сердечной! ужь не в моде  
По чувствам сердца говорить;  
Коварство, ненависть в народе  
В черед и мне искоренить.  
Сама вотще я поученья  
И тем, и сим преподаю;  
Да только знать нравоученья  
Все безтолковым я даю.

Уже и прутом я железным  
На свой их не поставлю лад;  
Большой простор друзьям любезным  
Такой чудотворить разлад.  
Но вот как возьму гремушку  
И ею всем задам толчок,  
Так вспомнят же небось старушку  
И затвердят ее урок.

Забудут у меня раздоры,  
Ненависть, зависть, клевету,  
Лукавство, хитрость, злобу, ссоры,  
Пронырство, козни, суету;  
Надменных, гордых я унижу  
И самолюбие попру;  
Высокомернаголь увижу —



Кичливой рог тотчас сотру.

Заставлю жить я поскромнее  
И добродетель уважать;  
Все ставши опытом умнее,  
Не будут ближних обижать;  
Старухи умничать не станут,  
Повес проклятых усмирю;  
Кокетки мудрить перестанут,  
Мужей с женами примирю.

Прижму я в руки непокорных,  
Нетерпеливых проучу;  
Изобличу ханжей притворных,  
Уму лжемудрых научу:  
Авось злословие не тронет  
Уже невинных наконец,  
В слезах счастливой не потонет  
И смолкнут жалобы сердец.

И ты, голубушка! мне снова  
Упреками не досаждай;  
Как быть, что я кажусь сурова:  
Когда предписано — страдай.  
Смиренье — свойство несчастливых,  
А вера есть подпора их;  
Надежда — чувство терпеливых,  
И я всегда пекусь о них.

Старуха с словом сим простилась  
И уплелась, Бог весть, куда;  
Опомнясь, я перекрестилась,  
Что так сплыла моя беда.

Нет, будет, бабушка! с тобою  
 Вперед судиться не хочу;  
 Играй, премудри надо мною,  
 А я поплачу, да смолчу.

***Fate's Rebuttal***<sup>34</sup>

*An aged woman appeared before me,  
 The like the world has never seen,  
 With knitted brow, her spirits fine,  
 She's like a woman in her prime.  
 She looks at me, her countenance stern,  
 Are you the one who challenged Fate?  
 She haughtily lays down the law:  
 I've come to answer your complaint.*

*I have enough unjust reproaches  
 Without yours adding to the list,  
 As soon as anyone feels wretched,  
 He cries and lays it at my feet.  
 He won't remember his own mischief,  
 No one looks within himself,  
 They call upon the Fate of Fates,  
 Though no one knows the point of this.*

*As if I'm always at my leisure,  
 Occupied by idleness.  
 No, children! Sometimes even I  
 Do not feel up to joyfulness;  
 It is no joke to steer the chariot,  
 See the great machine keeps going,  
 Flit about like some small bird,  
 To foresee all, be everywhere.*

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<sup>34</sup> Translation by Emily Lygo.

*But here I am, up bright and early,  
Tired of hearing these complaints,  
I've finished all my tasks and now  
I've come to cross-examine you.  
Why have you now, as in times past,  
Already ceased to live your life?  
You're ready to reproach me, yet,  
You've no desire to help yourself.*

*And since you have not only used  
Your words, but made an effort to  
Conduct your quarrel in rhymed verse,  
I think I'll make a start with you.  
It's your reproach that I bring grief  
To either you or else your friends,  
That I just shake my stormy head,  
Sometimes at you, sometimes at them.*

*How can it be you even dare  
To lay reprisals at my door?  
Perhaps you've lost your common sense,  
And so you act so brazenly?  
You think I play with you alone?  
I have the world to spin around.  
While here I punish, there I'm kind,  
I do whatever comes to mind.*

*I whip a storm up in a teacup,  
Send thunder on a summer's day;  
I churn the sea like it's a puddle,  
Make Sodom where before peace reigned.  
Then I'll transform kings into slaves,*

*While slaves turn out to be grandees,  
I make a fool appear a wise man,  
Expose the hero in the coward.*

*But since I have no favourites,  
I spread attention equally,  
You'll all receive, all without fail,  
Your destiny worked out by me.  
I give, I take, and I give back,  
Now bliss, now fame, now peace and quiet,  
I favour one, but scare another,  
Help some, and others crush with sorrow.*

*You should not even think of uttering  
A squeak of protest against me, no:  
I'm sometimes harsh, I'm sometimes kind,  
But you must all respect my role.  
I act according to God's will,  
And you in turn are ruled by mine,  
No matter what your future be,  
Be happy with your destiny.*

*Though life is hard, don't grumble now,  
Shedding tears for your own fate,  
But brace your heart and keep your silence,  
Learning how to love your chains.  
For I know what I have to do,  
And why and what the purpose is,  
I cannot argue with you over  
Fates I've given, and to whom.*

*And so, my dear! Now in your case,  
I'll weigh your fortune on a steelyard,*

*Setting what you've had from fate  
Against that which you haven't had.  
Let's remember, have you ever  
Lived through happy, pleasant days?  
Have I ever given sweetness  
To the sadness of your soul?*

*Before you even had been born  
You lost your father, so those years  
Of childhood you could not enjoy  
A father's love and tenderness.  
But on the other hand, did not  
I give you such a gentle mother?  
Sixteen years did you enjoy  
The fervent love she held for you.*

*For sixteen years you knew no sorrow,  
Friend! you lived a life of bliss,  
The hours were winged, they flew so fast,  
As though they were enchanted dreams.  
But time passed, and it was your turn  
To weep for ashes bitterly,  
You had to turn and face yourself,  
To understand yourself through grief.*

*Of course, I dealt with you severely,  
Was not merciful with you,  
There's little joy for you in having  
Weakened sight, poor hearing too,  
I didn't give you pleasing features,  
Nor a quick or clever mind,  
I cursed you with a funny figure,  
Made your movements unrefined.*

*Well, in a word, your fate was not  
To flutter like a butterfly,  
I did not give you gifts to make  
You dazzle in society;  
But neither did I furnish you,  
My friend, with a deceitful mind!  
No, you received, my daughter dear,  
A spirit generous and kind!*

*You figure on the list for friendship,  
I made you born to be a friend,  
Entrusted you with friendliness,  
Rewarded you with special friends.  
So don't reproach me, claim that Fate's  
Forgotten you forever more,  
The unseen Genius visited you,  
And never will it leave you more.*

*Both day and night, without a break  
It governs both your heart and soul,  
It could not bless you with two friends  
Without receiving my consent;  
Weren't they the ones in years gone by  
Who helped me bring you comfort, help?  
But there's no spring without a storm,  
Time came for you to weep again.*

*It isn't me, but evil fate  
That foists unscrupulous friends on you,  
The enmity between you comes  
From envy that's in all of you.  
There's nothing to be done, my dears!*

*For all things have their time, their hour,  
There's no use in reproaches now;  
We'll have to wait for time to tell.*

*And though you're worn down by your woes,  
You hold on to your constancy,  
Although forgotten by your friends,  
You won't betray them to the grave.  
Although malicious gossip strives  
To bring your friendships to an end,  
They are preserved within your soul  
And they are what keep you alive.*

*You aren't the worst off in the world,  
You're not alone in loneliness;  
You play upon your modest lyre  
And still keep friendship with the Muses;  
With poetry you can pour out  
All the feelings of your heart,  
And bent over your lyre, forget  
Your sorrows for an hour at least.*

*It's not your nature to be cunning,  
So please, leave speaking empty words,  
You are not one to be ungrateful,  
You shouldn't talk such rot to me.  
When have I ever taken all  
Your bosom friends away from you?  
And if you trusted in false friends,  
You only have yourself to blame.*

*Why did you not test the water,  
Not first try these new friends out?*

*Instead you waded straight on in,  
You let your simple nature lead.  
But after all, now you've turned thirty,  
Now it's time for you to learn.  
Why have you so incautiously  
Begun a friendship with a rogue?*

*Why pick a quarrel with the world  
And tear the masks away from traitors?  
Why take a coin you know is false  
And claim that it is tarnished gold?  
And if you saw objectively  
Some people wounding your dear friends,  
No one would blame you if you wished  
To get a warning sent to them.*

*Ahead with learning! Do not ever,  
Place your trust in hypocrites,  
And even with the truest friend,  
Be honest, but not all the time,  
Alone you cannot change the world,  
Or put perverted morals right,  
And moral preaching makes some laugh,  
While others will be bored to tears.*

*My heartfelt friend, it's not in vogue  
To talk of feelings of the heart;  
But I too will set about  
To root out hate and bad in man.  
Even I must find myself  
Teaching lessons all in vain,  
The moral lessons that I give  
Are wasted on these senseless lives.*



*My iron whip no longer works,  
To bring them into harmony,  
And if you give friends liberty,  
It only brings about discord.  
But if I shake my rattlesnake's tail,  
Use it to nudge them from behind,  
They soon remember this old woman,  
And even learn a lesson of mine.*

*With me they soon forget their quarrels,  
Their hatred, gossip, envy too,  
Their cunning, malice, and betrayals,  
Their pushiness and vanity.  
The proud and haughty I demean,  
I trample on the narcissists,  
If someone's haughty, arrogant,  
I shake the rattle of conceit.*

*I make them live more modestly,  
Make them hold virtue in esteem,  
Once wiser from experience,  
They won't offend dear ones again;  
Old women won't start getting clever,  
I'll deal with all the wretched rakes;  
Coquettes will stop their scheming ways,  
Husbands and wives will make their peace.*

*My hands will crush recalcitrance,  
I'll show impatience how to wait,  
I'll unmask false hypocrisy,  
Teach sense to those that would seem wise:  
And in the end the malice won't*

*Bring detriment to innocence.*

*The happy will not drown in tears,*

*The sorrow of your hearts will cease.*

*And you, my dear, do not again*

*Come bothering me with your reproach,*

*What can you do if I seem harsh:*

*When Fate's decreed that you will grieve?*

*Acceptance helps the suffering,*

*And faith will be support for them;*

*Hope is nurtured by the patient,*

*And I will always care for them.*

*With this the woman said farewell,*

*And disappeared to God knows where.*

*I came around and crossed myself,*

*Because my grief had passed away.*

*No, that's how things will be, old woman,*

*I will not judge you from now on,*

*So play with me, play tricks on me,*

*Though I may cry, I'll say no more.*

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